

ANC

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

SCIENCE FICTION

FEB.
35c



JAMES E. GUNN • ARTHUR SELLINGS • ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS
CHARLES E. FRITCH • FRANK BELKNAP LONG • F. R. BRYNING
ROBERT SHECKLEY • WINSTON MARKS • THEODORE R. COGSWELL
ALL STORIES IN THIS ISSUE BRAND NEW

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THE STORY BEHIND THE COVER . . .

In this month's cover illustration Alex Schomburg has combined his unusual gifts of understanding and imagination, and his mastery of color and line, to bring us a portrayal so rarely beautiful that we are more than a little reluctant to interpret its daringly symbolic inventiveness with pen strokes too boldfacedly literal.

In one shinningly provocative sense the space-suited figure hovering above the night-shadowed city toward which he is being borne by a vertiginous wheel of wonder is Everyman, full-panoplied in the splendors of tomorrow's science and facing unknown hazards with undaunted resolution.

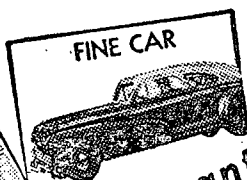
We may think of him as an exile, returning to Earth after some tragic and crippling disaster in space, returning to the city of his birth with his garments strangely pitted. The city below has changed. It is not quite the city he knew as a young lad, enticed spaceward by horizons more unfathomably mysterious and glowing than the horizons of Earth, nor is it quite the city of his dreams.

He must move cautiously, for the vicissitudes of war, and man's occasional genius for conquest without destruction may cause even the friendliest of cities to change hands. He must move guardedly, radar-testing the area before and beneath him with unceasing vigilance, for on caution his life may depend.

Or we may, if we choose, think of the city as remote from Earth. We may think of it as a metropolis on the Fifth Planet of the Bright Star Algol, and the space-suited figure as Everyman on his first journey starward, descending with a wild surmise toward alien rooftops, light-aureoled in the chill hours preceding dawn.

Or we may simply think of the city as completely independent of any particular space or time and the explorer as timeless too, enveloped in the symbolic beauty and mystery and strangeness that will be in all things until the end of time.

FRANK BELKNAP LONG



To the man who wants to enjoy
an ACCOUNTANT'S CAREER

IF you're that man, here's something that will interest you

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of \$4,000 to \$10,000?

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Why not, like so many before you, investigate LaSalle's modern Problem Method of training for an accountancy position?

Just suppose you were permitted to work in a large accounting house under the personal supervision of an expert accountant. Suppose, with his aid, you studied accounting principles and solved problems day by day—easy ones at first—then more difficult ones. If you could do this—and could turn to him for advice as the problems became complex—soon you'd master them all.

That's the training you follow in principle under the LaSalle Problem Method.

You cover accountancy from the basic Principles right up through Accountancy Systems and Income Tax Procedure. Then you add C. P. A. Training and prepare for the C. P. A. examinations.

As you go along, you absorb the principles of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Sta-

tistical Control, Organization, Management and Finance.

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Will recognition come? The only answer, as you know, is that success does come to the man who is really *trained*. It's possible your employers will notice your improvement in a very few weeks or months. Indeed, many LaSalle graduates have paid for their training—with increased earnings—before they have completed it! For accountants, who are trained in organization and management, are the executives of the future.

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A Correspondence Institution

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Address.....

City, Zone & State.....

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

FEB. 1955

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BUILD your own TV SET

Also Get Ready for a BIG-PAY Job
or a Business of YOUR OWN

in TELEVISION

**Builds Own TV Set
Makes \$250 Extra**

"A few days ago I was very happy to receive my Diploma from your C.T.I. Television Course and I am proud of it. It is framed and hanging in my work shop, which has a professional look with the test instruments I built with the parts you sent me. I made over \$250 from spare-time Radio and TV Service Jobs while still taking the course.

"The television set I built with the parts you sent is finished and receives all stations in this area. Before starting, I had no knowledge of radio or television. My fellow workers laughed about correspondence training. To date I have repaired sets for most of them. You are welcome to send any prospective students to view my work, and thanks again for a wonderful course."

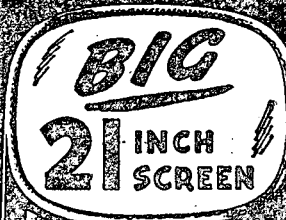
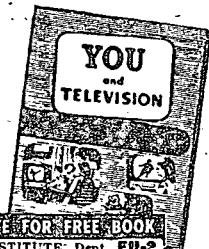
ERHART BAIER, Elmira, N. Y.

**His C.T.I. Home Built Set
Better than Others...also
has Spare-Time Business**

"I started up business for myself in spare-time. I feel proud of the set I built. It works swell and receives a better picture than many commercial sets. I am fifty miles from the nearest broadcasting station, which is Dayton. Most of the sets have use boosters or have them built in. I do not use a booster and really get a good picture. People just can't believe that I built my television receiving set. It is my best advertiser.

"C.T.I. gives all the cooperation possible. You really go right into service work after you complete this course."

CLEMENTS HOLTHAUS, Sidney, O.



**Get the Best T-V Training
with the Course that is
100% TELEVISION**

Don't settle for less than the BEST in TV Training. The C.T.I. Home-Shop Training Plan is 100% Television—not a radio course with some TV lessons tacked on. While taking the Course, you also build your own fine-quality, big 21-inch TV Set. Get ready NOW to CASH-IN on TV's great money-making opportunities. Trained TV Technicians needed everywhere. Take a Big-Pay Job or Have a BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN!

FREE book Shows You HOW

Send today for brand new TV Book, "YOU and TELEVISION." Gives you very latest facts and figures about your opportunity in this exciting, highly-paid, fast-growing field. No experience necessary. The C.T.I. 100% Television Course and Home-Shop Practice Plan quickly train you for a Fine Future. Rush coupon for Big FREE Book—TODAY!

**20 We Send YOU
Valuable KITS**

Along with your TV Course, you get 20—TWENTY—Kits of Top-Quality Parts, Tools, Professional Equipment. Besides Building your own TV Set, You also make Testing Instruments, Trouble-Shooting Devices, Other Apparatus you can use on TV Installation, Repair and Service Jobs. Many men more than pay for complete course with Spare-Time Earnings while still training. Get FULL FACTS FREE!

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| ☐ Drafting | ☐ Auto Mechanics | ☐ Nursing |
| ☐ Foremanship | ☐ Auto Body Repair | ☐ Millinery |
| ☐ Factory | ☐ Building | ☐ Charm and |
| ☐ Management | ☐ Construction | ☐ Modeling |
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Name _____

Address _____

**COMMERCIAL TRADES INSTITUTE
400 MADISON AVENUE
New York 17, N. Y.**

the unhappy man

by . . . James E. Gunn

When happiness was for sale he could have bought the brightest of shares. Why did he wait for the Gates of Paradise to close?

JOSH HUNT would never have noticed the advertisement if he hadn't spilled coffee all over the front page of the paper. The coffee spilled because his hand was shaking. His hand was shaking because he had gone on a bender the night before. He had taken too many drinks because . . .

But he was accomplishing nothing by following the chain of causation in the wrong direction.

The drenched front section of the paper was now unreadable. So after he had read everything else in the rescued back pages, he read the ad. It was unthinkable that he should speak to Ethel or even look at her this early in the morning. Even without a hangover it would have been unthinkable.

It was one of those little ads that nobody reads, about dandruff, unsightly complexions, headaches, false teeth, and "A NEW WAY TO STOP SMOKING." Obviously they were marked "advertisement" for a purpose which had little to do with newspaper restrictions. They were a warning to the reader like a "No

The Faustian theme has thrilled and chilled generations of readers from the golden Elizabethan days of Kit Marlowe to the somber Teutonic autumn of human despair in which Goethe lived and had his being. But never before has it appeared in such incredible modern garb as in this tale of a man who might have sold his freedom to the forces of darkness in exchange for a scientific future forever remote from human struggle and the joys thereof. An amazing novelette this, by one of the ablest writers in the field.

"Trespassing" sign—a warning to proceed at his or her own risk.

Josh had sworn to strangle the first advertising director who suggested anything remotely resembling it in connection with himself. Both the oath and the advertising director were safe, however, for electronic components aren't sold that way.

He read the ad, idly, while he was toying half-heartedly with two revoltingly healthy eggs, and went on to an ad for hearing aids. Then his eyes flashed back, and he read the ad again, carefully:

WHY BE MISERABLE?

Let Us
Solve Your Problems

*"A modern service
for the modern age"*

HAPPINESS GUARANTEED!

Dial P-L-E-A-S-U-R

Hedonics, Inc.

He hadn't been mistaken. The word wasn't "satisfaction." It was "happiness."

He started to say something to Ethel about it, and reconsidered. Turning masochistically to his breakfast, he forgot the incident entirely. Forgot it, that is, until he reached the plant.

He stared at the office door. Wedged between the frame and the frosted glass was a blotter. It was centered, with a nice regard

for balance, exactly below the gold-lettered legend on the door: HUNT ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING COMPANY, Electronic Equipment and Components, "*Hunt for the Finest*," Joshua P. Hunt, President.

The message on the blotter was a simple, chaste thing—three short lines of black sans-serif lettering on white, glossy stock:

YOUR HAPPINESS
IS OUR BUSINESS

Hedonics, Inc.

Joshua P. Hunt, President, jerked the card away and glared at it. Holding it distastefully between two fingers, he opened the door, stepped into the outer office and walked purposefully toward the desk of Marie Gamble, Secretary, who was blonde, lovely, and half his age. He dropped the blotter on her desk.

"Put out an all-department memo," he growled. "The company regulation prohibiting soliciting or distribution of advertising material in the plant has not been changed. Disregard of this by any employee will be cause for summary dismissal." Order me a bicarbonate. Who's waiting to see me?"

"Just Mr. Kidd, the union business agent. He's here about the new contract."

"That pirate," Josh grumbled and girded himself for another ulcerating day.

At quitting time Josh pushed his Cadillac through a clotted mass of his employees gathered just outside the plant gate. Their heads were swiveled back to study the sky, and at last they refused to give way at all. Impatiently, Josh shoved open the door, got out, and joined the skywatchers.

The airplane was almost invisible against the blue of the afternoon sky, but the puffy, white cloud trails were thick and untattered. They spelled out: HEDON. As Josh watched, an "I" was added, a "C," and an "S." When the plane finished the short slant of the comma and began the long straightness of the "I," Josh tore himself away and blasted through the crowd with his horn.

II

It had been a usual sort of day, hectic, that is; also frustrating, nerve-wracking, stomach-cramping, exhausting. . . . The children, luckily, were away at camp. After such a day, Josh couldn't stand them—or, as he had once admitted in a moment of rare honesty, at any other time.

There was only Ethel to contend with.

"Josh—" she began.

"Ummmph!" he grunted and walked past her into the study, shut the door behind him, dropped his briefcase on the desk, and mixed himself a tall, cool drink.

"To hell with the ulcers," he

muttered and tossed it down in three thirsty gulps.

After the second highball was well-settled, he began to feel vaguely human once more. He lowered himself into the cool, rich embrace of the red-leather easy chair which was, for him, more a symbol of success than his home, his car, or his mahogany-dark office, and flipped open the evening paper.

This time it was on the front page in the form of a news item. That it was not particularly newsworthy did not matter; such items are the meat and potatoes of the suburban newspaper.

NEW BUSINESS TO MILLVILLE, the headline shouted. Beneath it was a glowing description of the new personal 'services' corporation and the branch office it had opened in the suburb.

The address was familiar. It was in the industrial district, but Josh couldn't quite pinpoint it.

It was a most incomplete and unsatisfying news story. It told everything except the service the new corporation sold. Several times mention of it seemed inevitable, but each time the reporter leaped away from it with admirable agility.

Dinner was silent. Afterwards the food lay heavy in Josh's stomach, undigested and indigestible. As he shuffled through the papers he had brought home in his briefcase, he tried to dilute his misery with bourbon and soda.

By the time he was able to ignore it, he was unable to concentrate on the papers.

And then he found the card, and the evening was completely ruined. It glistened at him, a picture of a man prey to uncounted, nameless miseries, mouth drawn lower than his chin. Underneath was printed: UNHAPPY?

Josh frowned and leaned forward to toss the thing away, wondering idly how it could possibly have gotten mixed up with his papers. But as he moved, the picture, by some alchemy of printing, shifted.

The man was the same, but his woe had been exchanged for imbecilic bliss. The legend had changed, too. Now it was: *Hedonics, Inc.*

Josh brushed the card impatiently off the desk. It fluttered to the floor and landed face downward. As he leaned down to pick it up, he read the message on the back: Dial P-L-E-A-S-U-R.

The phrasing startled him.

For the first time since he had read the advertisement in the morning paper, Josh let himself think seriously about its meaning. *What are they selling?* he asked himself. He didn't know. He wanted to know. It had been a very clever campaign.

The second question was: *What is hedonics?*

That, at least, seemed easy enough to answer. He leafed through the dictionary. He found

the word between *Hedonic* and *hedonism*:

hedonics (-iks), *n.* see-ICS. *a* Ethics which treats of the relation of duty to pleasure. *b.* Psychology which treats of pleasurable and unpleasant states of consciousness.

He studied it thoughtfully. Ethics? Psychology? It's hard enough to sell psychology, and you can't sell ethics at all. You can scarcely give it away.

Whatever hedonics was, it wasn't an ethics and it wasn't a psychology. But it was logical to assume that it dealt with pleasure. You don't sell pleasure, and you don't sell happiness. You sell products or services and you hope they bring pleasure and happiness, but it isn't the same thing.

Josh couldn't define the service, but he could identify the business. It was a skin game. Josh could smell it a mile away. It was a business for suckers, and there was money in it. They don't give newspaper and blotter advertising away, he told himself. Skywriting is steep; and this reversible image stuff should be even higher—if they could find a printer to do it.

Add them together and it made a tidy sum.

"Josh—" Ethel began as he climbed the stairs to his bedroom.

"Ummmph," he said and shut the door behind him.

He stared at the night light for

a long while before his mind stopped racing and his taut muscles relaxed. *Skin game*, he told himself. It had a comforting finality to it.

Let the police take care of it, he thought. It was, after all, none of his business.

On that note of forgetfulness came a further forgetfulness, satisfying and complete:

But Hedonics, Inc., refused to be forgotten. The morning paper had a display ad which drew Josh's eye irresistibly. On his way to the office, he saw a billboard with a pure white background. In the middle was a cage; it held a bluebird, singing happily. Beneath it were two words: *Hedonics, Inc.*

As Josh walked through the outer office, Marie looked up and said, "Joy, Mr. Hunt!"

Josh's step faltered. "Joy?" he repeated.

Marie blushed prettily. "Good morning, I mean. It was on television last night—'Joy' that is—and it just slipped out."

He stared.

"What was on television?"

"A real happy story," Marie sighed. "Everybody was happy. It was sponsored by that new business with the funny name—"

"Oh," Josh said. "That. Anyone waiting for me?"

"Mr. Kidd and a salesman—"

"No salesmen today." Josh shuddered. "I'd rather see Kidd..."

"Good morning, Mr. Hunt,"

Kidd said as he came in. "Are you happy?"

"Am I *what*?" Hunt exclaimed.

"Sorry," Kidd said sheepishly. "Don't know what made me say that. Seems to be a new phrase that's going around."

They worked their way into the usual argument: job specialization versus job enlargement. Josh insisted that specialization had gone too far, that enlargement and rotation meant increased production, improved morale, and decreased complaints, mistakes, monotony, fatigue, and absenteeism. Kidd was convinced that the whole thing was only a sly management scheme to downgrade higher-paying jobs.

It ended, as usual, with both men pounding on the table and shouting their arguments at each other's heads like clubs. Afterwards Josh was exhausted, and the taste of old emotion was sour in his mouth.

He sneezed. His head was stuffed with hot cotton. There was no mistaking the symptoms: he was getting a head cold.

The rest of the endless day was still ahead of him.

He felt like putting his head down on his desk and sobbing. He didn't, of course. Men didn't do that. At least, not often.

Somehow he struggled through the day. Somehow he resisted the impulse to spring madly at the throats of the five people who greeted him with "Joy!" and the six with, "Are you happy?"

"Marie," he mumbled, "I won't be in tomorrow."

As he dragged himself through the front door of his French colonial home, Ethel greeted him with offensive gaiety. "Joy, Josh," she sang. "Are you happy?"

"I feel lousy," he shouted.

"Oh, dear," she said sympathetically, "what's the matter?"

"Everything," Josh moaned. "I'm coming down with a cold, my ulcers are acting up, and—"

"You know what you should do?" Ethel said earnestly. "You should call Hedonics, Inc."

Josh staggered back making a strangled, animal sound in his throat. He caught himself, stumbled into the study, and locked the door. Shakily he poured himself a drink, tossed it down, and poured another.

Sometime during the long, blurred evening, the situation became crystalline clear. What was wrong with him was Hedonics, Inc. It was the breeding pit of all his irritations. If it were gone; he could be happy again.

The only way to get rid of it was to do the job himself.

He had been wrong about leaving it to the police. It was his business; fraud was everyone's business. And the police wouldn't act until after the masses had been mulcted. Mulcted. He liked that word. He said it over to himself several times.

He picked up the telephone. Five minutes later he put it down,

frowning awesomely. Millville had a thoroughly unsatisfactory police department.

Yes, Mr. Hunt. No, Mr. Hunt. But we can't do that, Mr. Hunt.

Complaint, indeed! Proof, indeed!

He'd give them a complaint. He'd give them proof.

This time he dialed P-L-E-A-S-U-R.

The voice that answered was delightfully feminine. "Joy," it said. "This is Hedonics, Inc. How can we make you happy?"

"This," Josh said cautiously, "is Joshua P. Hunt."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Hunt," the girl said. "We've been expecting to hear from you."

The implications of that remark didn't register on Josh until long afterwards. "This service you offer," he said tentatively, "I'd like to learn more about it."

"Yes, sir," the girl said. "A salesman will call on you tomorrow morning. Ten? At your home?"

When Josh lowered the handset into the cradle, he was stretching his neck thoughtfully and a tiny muscle was jerking in his left eyelid.

III

What had seemed like a brilliant idea at midnight was quite another thing at the grim hour of ten. His head ached. His stomach was fiery and rebellious. His cold

was straddling his shoulders, jabbing at his sinuses and his raw, dripping nose.

He studied the card unhappily: WILLIAM A. "BILL" JOHNSON, *Hedonics, Inc.* Graduate, Institute of Applied Hedonics.

He turned it over. On the back was a quotation: *There is no duty we underrate so much as the duty of being happy.* Robert. Louis Stevenson.

He looked back at William A. "Bill" Johnson. Johnson was a youngish man, not over thirty, with sandy hair, a frank, open face, and an annoyingly cheerful disposition. He was just the type, Josh decided, to mulct widows of their savings.

"Mr. Johnson," he began, speaking painfully through his nose, "I—"

"Call me 'Bill,'" the salesman interrupted eagerly.

"Bill," Josh said, surrendering weakly. "I'm afraid I've changed my mind—"

"Surely you have a few minutes," Bill said, "to learn something about the service we offer."

Josh shrugged and sank back in his chair, blowing his nose sadly.

The dictionary, it seemed, had been incomplete. Besides "a Ethics. . . ." and "b Psychology. . . ." there should have been a third definition labeled "c Science. . . ."

"Science?" Josh echoed. "A science of happiness?"

Bill nodded cheerfully. "That's exactly it. Happiness can be located

more accurately than pitchblende, refined easier than uranium, synthesized more certainly than plutonium, and utilized more efficiently than a nuclear reactor. The entire curriculum of the Institute of Applied Hedonics consists of hedonics."

"And where is that institute located?" Josh asked sharply.

"Smithfield, Massachusetts," Bill answered quickly.

Josh silently repeated the name several times.

Hedonics, Bill said, wasn't an overnight miracle. It was a blending of many discoveries, many techniques. Some of them had been available for many years, and some of them had been developed only recently. But until a few years ago, no one had noticed their interrelationships and combined them into a single master science of happiness.

"And happiness; after all," Bill said, "is the aim of living, isn't it?"

"Perhaps," Josh admitted grudgingly.

"Let me put it this way," Bill said brightly, "we shun pain—or, to be more accurate, unpleasure—and we choose between two courses the one that seems less unpleasant."

Basically hedonics was a discipline. It was a psychological science. As such, its greatest virtue lay in the future; its greatest virtue was in the training of the young.

"That's fine," Josh said drily,

"but what can it do for me now—today."

Hedonics, it seemed, could do many things. Most firms specialized in a single service: cleaning, banking, accounting, plumbing, repairs of all kinds, delivery, employment . . . Hedonics, Inc., did everything. The client's problems became the problems of Hedonics, Inc. If the client needed a job, a job was found for him; more important, it was not just any job but a job that would make the client happy.

In addition, hedonics relieved pains, cured the sick, reshaped neurotic and psychopathic personalities, toned up the body, straightened out the mind, and removed such sources of unhappiness as salary worries, investment difficulties, budget impossibilities, marital problems, extramarital dilemmas, thwarted desires, and guilty satisfactions. . . .

"In short, Mr. Hunt," Bill said earnestly, "we provide the ultimate personal service. We do everything necessary to make you happy. That is our guarantee."

"How do you make it?"

"In writing, as an integral part of the contract."

"Fantastic," Josh muttered—adding, as he looked up, "that I haven't heard of your firm before. It's a novel and comprehensive service!"

"Yes, it is, Mr. Hunt. The company is new, but we are already on a sound financial footing, and we

are bonded against contract failure. We have been doing business privately, on a small scale, for several years, you see, and we are just now opening our service to the public. Actually, this is a test operation in this locality."

"I see," Josh said quickly, cutting off the sales talk. "You can make me well, you said."

"And happy," Bill added.

"You can cure the cold I have now?"

"Certainly."

Josh sat back, momentarily silenced by the beautiful audacity. "It must be very expensive," he said finally.

"As some of our advertising material says, it's a service you can't afford," Bill said, "to be without. As a matter of fact it isn't nearly as expensive as you might think. Not nearly as costly even, as purchasing those services individually that are available outside the company. During this special trial period, for instance, you can buy a limited service contract, including full diagnosis and indicated medical and psychological services, for only one hundred dollars."

"I take it, then, that you have an unlimited service contract?" Josh asked shrewdly.

Bill shrugged. "Oh, yes. But we aren't pushing it at this time. Now I have a contract with me right here . . ."

In a few moments Josh was alone. He had a contract, and an appointment for that afternoon, and

Bill had his check for one hundred dollars.

Josh smiled grimly. If the service was as slick as the salesman, it was a very clever operation indeed.

IV

Josh recognized the building. When he had leased it, it had been a warehouse. Now it still looked like a warehouse but dirtier, shabbier, more in need of repair. It hardly looked like a chain-store for happiness.

Sniffing, Josh sat in the Cadillac for a few minutes watching the procession. A constant stream of men and women entered the warehouse, and a second stream came out. Their appearance and dress placed them in all classes. The desire for happiness wasn't stratified. In those who came out, oddly enough, the distinctions had been largely erased.

But it was the numbers that impressed Josh. In less than two days, Hedonics, Inc., was doing a rushing trade.

The happiness business was booming.

Josh got slowly out of the car and worked himself into the line passing through a propped-open wooden door into the building. As he got inside, he stopped, stunned, and let himself be pushed aside.

The interior of the warehouse was magnificent.

The floor looked and felt like rosey marble. The walls were glow-

ing, a many-colored neutral plastic lighted from within. The whole front of the warehouse had been converted into a broad, towering waiting room, and the décor made it seem even bigger.

People streamed across the floor like travelers passing through a railroad station toward a distant, semi-circular information desk and a row of doorways on either side.

The total effect was not immensity but spaciousness, not cold beauty but joyous warmth. Josh took a deep, ragged breath as he turned slowly around.

Carved across the front wall were two fluorescent lines of poetry:

*All who joy would win.
Must share it. Happiness was born
a twin—*

Lord Byron.

"There's money behind this thing," Josh muttered.

Only when a deep, pleasant voice answered at his elbow did he realize that he had spoken the thought aloud. "Obviously, Mr. Hunt. We deal in a valuable service. When happiness is for sale, who would buy anything else?"

Josh spun around, startled. The man facing him was at least as old as Josh himself. But he seemed to be in much better health, and his face was carved with smile lines instead of crowsfeet and wrinkles.

He carried his graying head proudly, but his dark eyes were wise and kind. "My name is Rush," he

said, "but you'll find that I'm in no hurry. I'm at your service while you're here. If you have questions, I'll try to answer them. I presume, for instance, that you recognized the symbolism of the building?" He paused questioningly. When Josh was silent, he went on, "A shabby exterior—but color and warmth inside. Beauty and joy can live inside the ugliest of us."

Josh let himself be led across the floor, wordless before Rush's easy flow of chatter. They went through a doorway and down a short corridor and into a small room. In the middle of the floor was a single, large easy chair; against the wall was a desk; beside the desk was a straight chair.

"Sit down," Rush said, indicating the easy chair.

Josh sank into it gratefully and blew his nose.

"Cold?" Rush asked sympathetically, as he sat down at the desk. He glanced at the desk top occasionally as he went on, "We'll fix that up in a jiffy. Ulcers, too, eh?"

"How did you know?" Josh asked suspiciously.

Rush laughed easily; it was a happy sound. "I didn't do any research, if that's what you mean. It's the chair. You're sitting in our special, patented diagnostic chair." His hand moved across the desk.

Something touched lightly against the back of Josh's neck. He jumped to his feet and looked behind him. There was nothing there. His hand, which had gone automatically to his

neck, came away faintly damp. "What's going on?" he demanded indignantly. "What do you mean 'diagnostic chair'?"

"Sit down, Mr. Hunt," Rush said gently. "The chair won't hurt you. Hedonics is painless. That's why the chair looks like a chair instead of the steel, chrome, and marble torture instruments in dentists' offices."

Gingerly Josh eased himself back into the chair, but this time he sat primly on the front edge. "That's all very well, but what does it do?"

"It gives me an accurate and complete diagnosis of the physical condition of anyone sitting in it."

"I don't believe it," Josh snapped. "Nothing can do that!"

"You mean," Rush amended gently, "that you don't know of anything. This chair has been theoretically possible for ten years, technically feasible for five. There's nothing new in it. Given the proper incentive, anyone could have put it together."

"Nonsense!" Josh exclaimed. "This is revolutionary! Why haven't I heard about it? Why isn't it common knowledge?"

Rush shrugged. "This is the first public trial, you know. And we shouldn't minimize the natural resistance in the economy that has condemned many inventions to oblivion. You must have heard of the pellet that turns water into fuel, the non-dulling razor blade, the panaceas—"

"Myths! I'm an industrialist, and

I know. We make all kinds of tubes and tube-substitutes: vacuum, photoelectric, thermionic, gas-filled, cathode-ray, magnetron, klystron, transistors. And if someone invents one that will obsolete the rest, we'll start making that. No, when something as potentially valuable as any of the things you've mentioned is invented or discovered, a thousand companies will be rushing forward shaking their money in their hands. . . ."

Rush looked interested. "And you make electronic equipment. We should be able to strike a deal to put the basic design of the chair on the market—as a booth, perhaps. A vending machine for diagnosis: 'Get your weight, height, chest X-ray, metabolism, blood count, cancer test—all for only ten cents—'"

"Ten cents! You'd lose money on it. You'd have to charge at least a dollar or more."

"That would price health out of the reach of the people who need it most, contrary to the entire purpose of hedonics. The chair isn't nearly as complicated as you might imagine. But we can discuss it later. The chair, incidentally, is also a therapeutic tool. Treats diseases and physical malfunctions, adjusts endocrine balances, mends broken bones, that sort of thing."

"That sort of thing?" Josh repeated weakly. "How?"

"Oh, hypodermics mostly," Rush said offhand.

Josh laughed with relief. "The

chair diagnoses the case and then cures the ailment, eh?"

"That's right," Rush smiled. "How's your cold?"

Josh sniffed. The air smelled wonderful. His nose was clear; his head was unstuffed. "It's gone," he said.

"Millions," Josh muttered. "A cold cure like that would be worth millions. Why don't you put it on the market?"

"We have," Rush said simply. "It's part of the hedonic treatment. From our viewpoint, there would be no value in marketing it individually. We aren't interested in alleviating minor ailments—or major ones either for that matter. Our business is happiness, not medicine. Understand?"

Josh shook his head in bewilderment. "You mean you aren't interested in making money?"

"Of course we are. How else could we support this establishment and build others like it? How else could we make the services of Hedonics, Inc., available to everyone? But the money isn't a goal in itself; it's only the best way to get there."

"Very noble," Josh growled. "All right. This chair diagnoses ailments and cures them. What else do I get for my hundred dollars?"

"You've noticed, I presume, that your ulcers are much better?"

An awed, introspective expression spread across Josh's face. He took a deep breath and felt helplessly across his upper abdomen. "I do believe—" he began, and then his

face became suspicious. "How can I be sure?"

Rush chuckled. "Go to your own physician. He'll tell you."

"I will," Josh said firmly. If it was a bluff, he intended to call it. "Is this all?"

"You want more?" Rush asked, wide-eyed. "Where else could you buy cures for a cold, ulcers, and get a complete physical tune-up for one hundred dollars? You're in better shape now than you've been since you were thirty. Is this all, though? As a matter of fact, it isn't. You've had only the first half of the treatment. If it's convenient, the second half will be taken care of tomorrow at the same time."

"What does that consist of?"

"You've had the preliminaries. Without the rest—without psychological therapy comparable to the physical treatment you've already received—what you've had would be worthless. You'd get more colds. Your ulcers would return worse than ever. I repeat, we're not in the medical business. We're in hedonics!"

"But I don't need psychological therapy," Josh protested. "And even if I did need it, I don't think I'd like it. I'm not maladjusted."

"Are you happy?" Rush asked quietly.

Josh realized, with a start, that it wasn't a rhetorical question. "I think that's an indecent question."

"Don't you want to be happy?"

"I suppose so," Josh said slowly.

"But not if it means tampering with my personality—"

Rush sighed sadly. "Humanity has an infinite capacity for misery. It searches for ways to make itself unhappy, partly, I suppose, out of masochism, partly out of the necessity for self-punishment for subconscious guilt-feelings. Look! Hedonics doesn't tamper with your personality. It only shows it how to express itself in joyful ways; it gives it the techniques of happiness."

"How?" Josh asked suspiciously.

"We start by relieving the obvious disturbances. The tics, the nervous habits—like the twitch in your left eyelid and the way you stretch your neck."

Josh felt himself start to stretch his neck, felt his eyelid twitch. He hadn't noticed them for a long time. Now, when he tried to control them, he found it impossible.

"You have headaches in the evening, hangovers in the morning, the shakes before breakfast. You drink too much, smoke too much, depend too much on stimulants. We relieve the first and remove the necessity for the second."

"A secular chaplain with a club," Josh sneered.

Rush smiled easily. "You might call us that. Unhappiness is often no more than a bad habit. We can break that as easily as we can break the others. Then we get at your phobias—"

"I don't have any phobias—"

"I was sure you had most of

them. Acrophobia, claustrophobia, homilophobia, even phobophobia—the fear of being afraid—

Josh shook his head stubbornly. "You're mistaken."

"Surely not," Rush said, his eyes wide. He moved his hand across the desk.

Suddenly the lights were gone. Josh was in dense blackness, so complete it seemed to have texture. It was close around him, stifling. There was a mountain above him, pressing down heavily upon him with its psychic weight, compressing the air. . . .

Panic fluttered in his throat and banded his chest with tight, cold metal. "Stop it!" he shouted, his voice breaking. "Turn on the lights!"

The lights came on. Josh blinked angrily.

"That," Rush said cheerfully, "was claustrophobia." His hand moved again.

The ground was a million miles below. People and cars scurried around on it like microbes on a slide. The side of the building faded away beneath him, and Josh felt his insides turn liquid and cold, and his grip on the metal railing over which he was leaning became palsied and weak as if the strength had drained away. He felt himself falling, and it was almost as if he had thrown himself into the hungry void.

A scream started somewhere deep inside of him. . . .

Josh was sitting on the edge of

the chair, the scream still rising in his throat. He choked it off and glared at Rush.

"That," Rush said, "was acrophobia. I could go on, but I think the demonstrations have proved my point."

By the time Josh found his voice, he had regained control of himself. "If the cold cure was worth millions, that device would be worth billions in entertainment alone."

Rush shrugged as if the matter were supremely unimportant. "It's a useful therapeutic device. Perhaps you'll have a chance to really see it in action later on. To get on—after we clean up the phobias, we attack your real hedonic problems—"

"All this for one hundred dollars?" Josh asked in amazement. "This is the special? The limited service contract?"

Rush nodded.

"How do you make money on it?"

"We don't," Rush admitted, "although our techniques are so standardized that we break about even. This, of course, is an introductory offer and will become considerably more expensive later—for those who can afford it, that is. For those who can't, we do free clinical work. What we make money on, actually, is the unlimited service contract."

"What is there left for you to do?" Josh asked.

"We take care of everything; we arrange your life so that you never have to worry again. In this age of

anxiety, you never have to be anxious. In this age of fear, you need never be afraid. You will always be fed, clothed, housed, and happy. You will love and be loved. Life, for you, will be an unmixed joy. There are additional benefits, such as our researches in longevity—just now bearing fruit, incidentally—which will be used for the benefit of our unlimited service clients first of all.”

“Happiness,” Josh said distantly, “and a long life to enjoy it in! That would be worth a fortune.” But he could hear warning bells ringing in his head. They said: *skin game! skin game!* “What’s the price?”

“As you say,” Rush said thoughtfully, “it would be worth a fortune. The price is steep, but it’s worth it. The price is—everything.”

“Everything?” Josh repeated, his voice squeaking a little.

Rush nodded soberly. “All assets, including personal and real property and savings, and future earnings are signed over to the corporation. It isn’t as exorbitant as it sounds. The client has no more use for money. All his needs are taken care of by the corporation.”

“There’s a great inequity,” Josh protested. “A laborer might have only a few dollars. A wealthy man would have to pay millions—”

“It depends upon your yardstick,” Rush said, shrugging. “To both it is all they have. For us, it averages out, and it can’t matter to our clients. Money is worthless to them. They already have, after all,

everything that money can buy—happiness. And it couldn’t buy that until recently.”

“But what if a man isn’t happy?”

“In that unlikely event,” Rush said, “the contract would be void and the money would be refunded in full.”

It was all very plausible, Josh thought, but there had to be a catch somewhere. “If I wanted to take out unlimited service, then, I’d have to turn over to you all my property, my business, my savings—everything?”

“That’s right,” Rush said cheerily.

“You must not find many customers for that!”

“On the contrary, we have a great many already.”

“This,” Josh said firmly, “is one you won’t get.”

Rush spread out his hands pacifically. “That, of course, is up to you. Unhappiness isn’t a crime. Not yet, anyway.”

Josh picked it up quickly. “What do you mean—not yet?”

“Eventually hedonics will become nation-wide—even world-wide. And eventually we will need legislation—not for ourselves but to protect the rights of minorities. It must be made a part of the primary school curriculum, and everyone must have the protection of the basic right—the right, Mr. Hunt, to be happy.”

“The right the Declaration of Independence was concerned

about," Josh said slowly, "was the pursuit of happiness."

"That was when happiness was an art. Now it is a science. We have pursued it long enough. It's time we caught up with it. Well, Mr. Hunt," Rush said, getting up, "I've kept you long enough for your first treatment. I'll expect you tomorrow to complete the therapy."

Josh nodded somberly as he rose from the chair. He would be back. With, he hoped, a surprise for Rush and Hedonics, Inc.

"By the way," Rush said as Josh reached the door, "about the manufacture of the diagnostic equipment—"

"I'm afraid I wouldn't be interested," Josh said, shaking his head slowly. "There isn't much profit in nickels and dimes."

"It depends," Rush replied, "on what kind of profit you want."

And Josh, pondering that remark, walked out of the room, down the corridor, across the vast waiting room, and out into the afternoon.

V

J. M. Cooper, M.D., looked up, bewildered. "Well, yes, as far as I can tell, if your ulcers are not completely cured they are so much improved that they are inactive."

"What about the cold?" Josh asked.

Cooper put his hands together thoughtfully. "Cleared up—that is if you really had a cold."

"What would be the point of

lying about it?" Josh roared. "I've had thousands of colds, and this one was a dilly."

The doctor nodded agreeably. "I suppose you know. But also, I'm sure, you've had colds that cleared up spontaneously in one or two days. That's why cold remedies—and other so-called 'miracle drugs'—must be tested, with controls, in a careful, scientific manner before any judgment can be passed on them."

"But if the ulcers and the cold were cured—how was it done?"

"I haven't got the slightest idea," Cooper said frankly. "But if I had to guess, I'd say that the method was a cousin to faith healing."

"But I had no faith in the thing at all."

Cooper shrugged. "You expected something to happen. You were impressed. The hypodermic injection was a stimulus to auto-suggestion—in effect you cured yourself. Your ulcers, after all, were psychosomatic. Your mind inflicted them on your body; your mind cured them. That's all."

"Sounds very simple."

"Oh, it isn't simple. If it were, we'd all be doing it. Much easier than diet, drugs, and surgery, eh?"

"Then, actually, it's all hokum?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that. I've got no doubts that they've stumbled onto something in the auto-suggestion line which may prove effective in many cases. We must realize that we are living in an age of stress,

and the stress diseases are everywhere—the stomach cramps, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcers, hypertension, asthma, some heart diseases, ulcerative colitis . . .”

“Aren’t you worried about your practice?” Josh asked, frowning.

Cooper laughed. “Such cases are necessarily limited, and I’ve found that germs and viruses are virtually immune to auto-suggestion. These miracle cures turn out to be only temporary manias. They run their course and are forgotten. No. As fantastic as these chairs seem there will always be a medical profession.”

“Could this be a case of fraud?”

“Well, yes—I suppose there is that possibility.”

“If it is—would you help me expose it?”

“I—uh—hesitate to become involved—”

“Don’t you think it’s your duty to the community and to your profession to make certain that anyone treating the sick in this community is fully qualified to do so?”

Cooper ran his hand through his close-cropped hair. “Since you put it that way, I suppose it is.”

Josh nodded curtly. “I’ll let you know what you can do.”

When he left the doctor’s office, there were still several hours of the afternoon left. He walked briskly along in the sunshine feeling better than he had felt in years. *That*, he thought, *is what comes of having an outside interest.*

The thought of outside interests

reminded him of the business, and he felt a flash of guilt. He turned his car toward the plant.

Marie looked up from her desk, surprised. “I didn’t expect you, Mr. Hunt. You looked so sick last night. But today you look much better.”

“Thank you, Marie,” Josh said jauntily. “I feel fine. Have there been any calls for me?”

“Mr. Steward, your lawyer, has been trying to reach you. And Mr. Kidd has been waiting.”

“Get Mr. Steward for me. Meanwhile I’ll talk to Kidd.”

“Oh, and Mr. Hunt—while you are here—I want to tell you that I’m resigning. I’m getting married.”

Josh had been turning toward the office. He stopped abruptly and came back. He realized at that moment how much he had come to depend on his daily contact with youth and beauty. It wasn’t a question of gamboling with Marie—at least only in distant and fancy hypothesis—but it had been something to look forward to, to cherish secretly, to make his days endurable.

“But I thought you wanted a career!”

She blushed prettily. “I thought so, too. But I just realized—I mean I was made to realize—that what I really wanted all the time was a home and a family. That’s what would really make me happy.”

Her blush deepened.

A dark suspicion settled around Josh like a mantle. “I see. Hedonics, Inc., was it?”

She sighed ecstatically and nodded.

"All right, Miss Gamble," Josh said distantly, divorcing himself. "I'm sorry to lose you, but I'm sure you know best."

That was the first surprise.

Kidd was the second. He was almost sickening. He didn't argue. He didn't pound the table. He said, "You're right, Mr. Hunt. Job enlargement is the answer. I agree with you, and the men agree with you."

"Wh—what?" Josh spluttered.

"Yes, sir, and we'll sign that contract."

"What's the matter with you?" Josh demanded.

"I've just realized, Mr. Hunt, that all this blustering and argument doesn't do anything but make everybody unhappy. And another thing I've found out is that I wasn't cut out for this business agent stuff. I was happier when I was a worker in the factory. With your permission, that's what I'm going back to."

His mouth sagging open, Josh looked at Kidd. Consciously he forced his mouth shut and said, "Hedonics—?"

"That's right," Kidd said happily.

The telephone saved Josh from blurting out what he thought about Hedonics, Inc. "Excuse me," he muttered, picking up the receiver. "Hello?"

"This is Steward," his lawyer said in a high-pitched, excited voice.

"You know this new firm in town—the one that calls itself Hedon—"

"I know it," Josh said grimly.

"They just had a representative in my office. They now own half of Hunt Electronics . . ."

VI

Josh leaned forward in his chair, staring intently at Steward's mouth, outlined at the top with a thin, pencil-stroke moustache, as if seeing it move made the words easier to understand. "I still don't understand what you're talking about," he said. "You mean my wife signed one of their unlimited service contracts?"

"That's what I've been trying to tell you," Steward sighed. "And that contract gives them half ownership of your business."

"How can my wife sign away my business?" Josh demanded for the thirteenth time, feeling his ears getting hot.

"Only half of it," Steward said patiently, smoothing his little moustache methodically. "It stems from the community property law of this state. She owns half of what you own. She's signed it all over. That gives them a half interest in—"

"All right, all right," Josh said. "I get that part. Does that mean they own half my house, too?"

Steward nodded. "And half your savings, shares in other companies, cars—in other words, half of all your assets."

"But not half of what I'll earn

in the future, surely," Josh pleaded.

"That's a moot point," Steward said thoughtfully. "I imagine that would have to be tested in court."

"What can I do?" Josh asked helplessly.

"Well, they'll probably accept a cash settlement on the house. Otherwise you'd have to sell. As for the rest, that can be arranged—"

"No, no!" Josh exploded. "We can't do that. I'll fight it. We'll take it to court! We'll prove that the contract is worthless."

Steward shook his head slowly and determinedly. "As your lawyer I've got to warn you that you'd be throwing your money away. Whoever drew up this contract made it airtight and waterproof. The greatest contract lawyer in the country couldn't get out of this one."

"There's undue influence," Josh cried desperately, "—and temporary insanity."

Steward shrugged. "You know your wife better than I do. And you know what you're willing to go through in court. Insanity proceedings are never pretty. Even so, it's doubtful if you could make it stick. Attached to the contract is a psychiatrist's certificate of sanity."

"That's evidence, isn't it?" Josh exclaimed, tapping the desk with a trembling finger. "That shows they were afraid we'd attack there. It's their weak point. It's—"

"Hopeless, Mr. Hunt," Steward said flatly. "You'd better save your

energy to find a way to keep control of the company."

"Then this is what they're trying to do," Josh said slowly, pounding out the words to the rhythmic thump of his fist on the desk. "Why can't anyone see the danger? In a few weeks they'll own Millville—industry, real estate, municipal property right down to the sewers. They'll own everything fixed in place and everything movable including three-fourths of the people—"

"They can't own people," Steward objected. "That's slavery."

"Read that contract again," Josh told him sternly. "It's worse than slavery. That, at least, left the mind free." His voice became quiet, but its intensity was more frightening than if he had shouted. "I can see it clearly now. A gigantic plot. Within a few years Hedonics, Inc., will be the greatest single economic force in the country. They will own the United States. It won't be necessary to take over the government. Hedonics, Inc., will permit the government to take out an unlimited service contract—"

Steward had been studying Josh apprehensively. "That's a lot of extrapolation from a single incident—"

"Occasionally," Josh said, his eyes looking through Steward and the wall behind him into infinity, "the power of prophecy is given to even the most insensitive among us. I can feel it in me now, demanding speech. . . . There's nothing that

can stop Hedonics, Inc., you see, this lust for power masquerading behind an imbecilic smile. A snowball is an easy thing to halt when it is little, but let it plunge down hill—laden with the eon-long weight of a people's dreams—and it will grow into an avalanche that will sweep nations and continents in front of it."

Steward was impressed in spite of himself. "I suppose there is an element of danger—"

"I am only the first," Josh continued. "After me will come millions who will be overwhelmed and forgotten. The time to stop it is now—now while it's still small—or the time will be gone forever."

Steward nodded slowly.

Josh took a deep breath. When he spoke again, his voice was back to normal. "What did their representative want?"

Steward started and shook his head. "Wanted you notified. Tell him, he said, that Hedonics, Inc., won't be a difficult partner. You are to go ahead and run the business just as you have been running it. They won't interfere."

"Damn'd decent of them," Josh growled.

"One more thing," Steward went on. "He said that the corporation would like to suggest the manufacture of some kind of—coin-operated booth, I think it was—"

Josh's sigh was a minor explosion. "So. I'm to dig my own grave. I won't do it. I was right the first time: We have to fight them. And

that's what I'm going to do if I have to throw the second half after the first."

"But I've explained—"

"Look! The contract is no good if the contracting party is engaged in illegal activities. Isn't that right?"

"Well, yes, in general I suppose that's—"

"It's invalid, isn't it, if the contractor can't fulfill the terms of the contract?"

"That's right, but—"

"They guarantee happiness, don't they? Let's make them prove that they can supply it!"

VII

The sound of the front door slamming shut was hollow and empty. Josh stood in the hall feeling the silence close around him, and he couldn't control a shiver. He knew then that there was no one else in the house.

He called out anyway. "Ethel!" A moment later, he called again, but his voice was weak and hopeless. "Ethel?"

The dark bundle of anger he had carried home with him had vanished. He had not spoken more than a dozen words to his wife that week. Now when he had many to say to her she wasn't there. It was like the woman—like all women, perhaps—that they should be there when they are not wanted, and when they are needed, never there.

If he had found her then, he

would not have spoken all in anger. At the moment he understood her, better perhaps than he had ever understood her before. But slowly that leaked away and was as if it had never been.

He found the note on the desk in the study. It said:

Dear Joshua:

I have gone to get the children. I have spent too much of my life away from them because of this reason or that reason. I realize now that we worry too much about what is good for people. That is wrong. What we should be concerned with is their happiness.

I know I would be happier if the children were with me. I think the children would be happier, too.

Ethel.

He looked at the note for a long time after he had finished reading it, but he wasn't seeing the words. He was seeing Ethel as he had seen her many years ago—young, beautiful, and in love. He was remembering the way he had looked at her then and talked to her then, and he was wondering how it had all changed.

There were no icecubes in the little bar. Josh poured the bourbon carelessly into a glass and drank it that way, warm and neat. He didn't even taste it.

This was what Hedonics, Inc., had done to him. It had taken away control of the business he had built; it had taken half of every-

thing he owned. And it had taken his wife and children. Beside that the rest was meaningless.

The grief was too great for anyone to bear.

The second glass of bourbon seemed to sweep away the mists of emotion. Everything became clear. He had lost everything. He would fight for it. He would win it all back. Hedonics, Inc., was a racket. He would expose it, before the world.

A small, unquiet thought crept into his mind: *but was it a racket?*

Could he be sure that Hedonics, Inc., couldn't fulfill their contracts? Could he be certain that they had not found the age-lost secret of happiness, that they had not located the sealed gates of paradise and found a way through them or around them or over them. . . .?

If they had discovered techniques and devices for netting happiness like a bluebird then there was only one thing for a sensible man to do. He should take out an unlimited service contract.

When happiness is for sale, only a fool will not buy.

A man couldn't afford to take chances. The smart thing to do was check. That was simple enough. Josh opened his dictionary to the back pages. They contained a list of United States colleges and universities. He ran his finger down the column; *Indiana, Indiana, International. . . .*

There was no Institute of Applied Hedonics. As an additional

precaution, Josh checked under "Applied" and "Hedonics." Nothing.

The Institute of Applied Hedonics was a pipe dream.

So was Hedonics, Inc.

So was happiness.

Question: how could he prove it—legally?

As he sloshed his glass full for the third time, he pondered the mystery of the bourbon that refused to make him drunk. His mind was crystalline.

He sipped the amber stuff this time, and it went down like water. Something was beating, rhythmically, at the gates of his mind. He swung them open and let it in. It was two lines of poetry:

*I wonder often what the vintners
buy
One half so precious as the stuff
they sell.*

That was it, of course. That was the logical proof he had been waiting for. It would be worthless in court, but to Josh it was conviction.

If they were happy, if they had that bluebird fluttering in their cage, why did they want to sell it? If a man has found paradise, why should he sell guided tours? After all desires are satisfied, what is the incentive for further striving? What did they buy?

Answer: there was nothing they could buy. That already had everything.

Hedonics was a fallacy.

Now to expose it, permanently.

He dialed the number with a steady finger. "Lieutenant Marsh?" he said.

VIII

"You don't have to vocalize," Rush said. "In fact, I'd rather you didn't. What we're after is your reactions to a standard set of key words, and those are independent of your answers. The diagnostic chair will give me the readings—chiefly from your psychogalvanic reflex—that will be plotted against the stimuli, and we will have a graphic representation of your hedonic problems. Ready, Mr. Hunt?"

Josh squirmed uneasily in the chair. "No hypodermics?"

Rush smiled gently. "No hypodermics."

"All right," Josh sighed. "Shoot."

He leaned back guardedly.

"Father," Rush said in a professionally neutral voice. "Mother. Girl. Children. Money. Property. Wealth. Poverty. Wife. Hopes. Dreams. Work. . . . Roses. Diamonds. Happiness—" He broke off after fifteen minutes and glanced at the desk top. "That's enough. Do you want a reading, Mr. Hunt?"

"A what?"

Rush's smile was deprecating. "You know—the gypsy stirs your tea leaves and tells you your past and your future. We can only guess at your future, but we can give you

a very accurate picture of your past and present."

"No, thanks," Josh said firmly. "I never go to tea rooms."

Rush shrugged. "That's up to you."

"Is this all?"

"No," Rush drawled. "Now we tell you how to be happy. But perhaps you'd rather pass that up, too."

"Go ahead. Tell me."

"You'd be much happier," Rush said seriously, "working with your hands. Build something. Make something. Even assemble equipment in your own factory. If you could conquer your need for recognition and acclamation, you'd be happiest as a sculptor. You have a strong tactile sense, you see, and a solid feeling for form— But I wasn't to give you a character analysis, was I?"

Josh chuckled. "And yet I've built one of the finest businesses of its kind in the country. How do you account for that?"

There was triumph in his stare.

"I didn't say you'd be more successful," Rush explained slowly. "I said you'd be happier. That isn't the same thing, and a recognition of true and false goals is an integral part of the hedonic techniques. The challenge of a job a man really isn't equipped to handle can stimulate him to fantastic efforts—and at the same time ruin his temperament, his digestion, and his home. Is it worth it? The only sensible answer is: no! But, since you in-

tend to disregard the advice, there's no use continuing this."

"Have I had my hundred dollars' worth?"

"Substantially, yes."

Surprisingly, then, it was Rush who was on his feet, who was at the door before Josh could move. The door opened. "All right, gentlemen," Rush said calmly. "You can come in now."

They came in sheepishly, like small boys caught listening at keyholes: Cooper, Steward, and Marsh, the police detective, carrying a wire recorder.

"How did you know we were there?" Marsh demanded suspiciously.

"Mr. Hunt should have known better than to have tried to bribe our receptionist. What possible use could she have for money? I presume you have a search warrant?"

"Yes," Marsh said.

"What is the complaint?"

"Fraud. And other things."

"Sworn out by Mr. Hunt, eh?" Rush said easily. "Against me personally or against the corporation?"

"Both."

"Well, turn your recorder on. You might as well be recording this, too."

"You're recording it?" Marsh exclaimed, his heavy face wrinkling into a frown. "I don't know as that's legal—"

"I assure you, Mr. Marsh, it is. Unless you have a warrant for my arrest and wish to take me downtown. No? Well, let us proceed.

You, I presume," he said, turning to the doctor, "are Doctor Cooper? And you must be Mr. Steward. What are the charges against me, specifically? I'd rather clear up this misunderstanding now than drag it through the courts."

"The first one," Josh said, scowling at the ease with which Rush had taken charge, "is practicing medicine without a license."

"Oh, dear," Rush said, "where did you get that idea? Simply because I don't have diplomas and licenses scattered around the walls? Here." He reached into a desk drawer that sprang open as his hand approached it, and he pulled out a folder thick with papers. He handed it to Cooper. "I think you'll find all the documents you want."

Cooper leafed through the odd sizes and grades of heavy paper. Josh watched him intently. If Rush thought he could wriggle free so easily, he was in for a rude shock.

Cooper looked up. "It—uh—all appears to be in very good order." He looked at Rush. "Excellent record, Doctor."

"He is a doctor, then," Josh insisted.

"Oh, yes. All his diplomas are here, his certificates of internship, residency, specialization—including internal medicine and neuropsychiatry, state license to practice, advanced study at the Institute of Applied Hedonics. . . ."

"All right, Cooper," Josh said coldly. "I'll take your word for it."

But Cooper wasn't finished. "Tell

me, Doctor Rush, how did you cure those ulcers—?"

Rush smiled. "I'd be happy to discuss the whole matter with you later—including the fact that hedonic therapists must be drawn from the ranks of the profession that would appear to be most threatened by hedonics." He turned back toward Josh. "Next charge?"

"We'll want to study your articles of incorporation," Josh said, "but we'll let that go until later."

"Oh, no," Rush objected, pulling out another folder and handing it to Steward. "You'll find them all in order. We've been careful to comply with state law in all particulars."

"We could press a charge of slavery—" Josh began.

"If you're referring to our unlimited service contract—how? It's a simple contractual relationship which can be broken off at any time with a full return of all fees paid—by the simple statement of the client that he isn't happy. That can't be considered slavery by any definition."

Josh was silent for a moment. Explosively, triumphantly, then, he said, "Prove, then, that you are contracting for a performable service."

Rush looked up quickly. He seemed a little startled. *I have him now*, Josh gloated grimly.

"Prove that we can make people happy?" Rush said. "That isn't necessary, you know. It's up to you to prove that we don't."

"That's right," Steward said un-

expectedly. "The burden of proof rests on the complainant."

Josh glared at the lawyer. "And I'm going to prove it," he said. His head swiveled back toward Rush. "I'm going to tie you up in court until you can't wriggle. I'll get an injunction against the corporation until the case is settled. Maybe you can't lose it, but you can't win it, either. You'll never get out of court, *because you can't prove that you've made a single person happy!* How can you measure happiness? You can't even define it!"

Rush shook his head slowly, pityingly. "How long do you think your case would last against testimony like this?" He passed his hand over the desk.

The door opened. There was a woman standing behind it. She took one step into the room.

Josh's face was red. The veins in his neck grew large and swollen. He took one step toward her. "Ethel," he said, and his voice was half strangled.

She held up one hand as if to hold him away. "Don't come close to me," she said.

"Tell him," Josh pleaded brokenly. "Tell them all. Tell them you aren't happy. Tell them it was all a mistake—"

"Joshua," she said, and her voice was hollow and distant, "Joshua—I never knew what happiness was until the day before yesterday."

Suddenly her face changed. Instead of the placid, resigned features of a middle-aged woman be-

ginning to grow gray and old, her face became radiant, haloed somehow with joy so that she became ageless, eternally youthful, filled like a lamp so full of peace and happiness that it overflowed incandescently, bathing everything around.

"But now I know," she said. "Do you think I could give that up?" She shook her head sadly at Josh. "Don't be stubborn, Joshua."

And she turned and was gone before anyone could move. Josh sprang to the door, but the corridor was empty. When he swung back, Marsh was shifting his weight uneasily back and forth.

"I—uh—guess there isn't much use for me here," he ventured.

Josh stepped savagely toward Rush. "I'll make a complaint," he shouted. "Hedonics, Inc., hasn't made me happy!"

"I'm sorry to hear that, Mr. Hunt," Rush said earnestly. "In that case, according to the terms of the contract, I must do this." He took a slip of paper off the desk and handed it to Josh.

Josh looked down at it, but he already knew, with a leaden feeling of defeat, what it was. It was a check made out to Joshua P. Hunt for \$100.

He stood there with the slip of paper in his hand, dazed, unable to move. The others left—he felt rather than saw it happen: Marsh, muttering an apology; Steward, handing back the sheaf of legal papers with a shrug; Cooper, with

an appointment for a conference. . . .

"You'll never take over the country," Josh said, and he heard his own voice as if it came from a long way off. "The government will move in to regulate you before then. There are laws of monopoly and restraint of trade—"

"But we are a non-profit organization," Rush said gently. "That will protect us for a long time. Moreover, a large percentage of congressmen and government officials are already clients."

A groan broke from Josh's lips. "It's a fake. It has to be. There isn't any Institute of Applied Hedonics."

Rush leaned forward intently. "How do you know?"

"I looked it up in a list of colleges and universities."

Rush smiled sympathetically. "The Institute was founded only six years ago. If your list was older than that, naturally it wouldn't include the Institute."

Frozenly, Josh recognized the truth. He had owned the dictionary since college.

Licking dry lips, he waited.

"You refused a character analysis once," Rush said. "I'll give it to you now. You're a materialist. You believe only in those things you can hold in your hands. Real abstractions, are completely beyond you: love, friendship, happiness. . . . There is a demon in some men that refuses to let them recognize happiness or seek it. You would reject

paradise if you did not build it yourself."

Josh's head drooped. "But what *do* the vintners buy?" he demanded puzzledly.

Rush shook his head without hope. "The hedonic techniques aren't something magical. They're a reorientation and a discipline—a control not over external events but over our reactions to them. Happiness is inside. All you have to do is recognize that. Oh, it isn't easy. It's hard work, harder than anything anyone has ever done. But it's worth it.

"What do we buy? I'll tell you. We buy happiness. Not for ourselves—for everyone. Sure—money is no good to us. Not if we're happy. But if we're happy, you understand, we want others to be happy, too. That's a law of human nature, just as we want others to be miserable when we are miserable. Hedonics, Inc., is the answer to the question: how can everyone have a chance at happiness?

"Hedonics, Inc., has unusual requirements for its recruits. They must be altruists. Their happiness must lie in making others happy. . . ."

IX

Josh sat in the red-leather chair, half of which belonged to him, and studied the amber depths of the liquid in the glass. Here, at least, was a kind of happiness—oblivion.

The only trouble was that obliv-

ion refused to come. Whiskey had ceased to affect him. Had Hedonics, Inc.; taken that away, too?

There was still no ice; perhaps there never would be any ice. The house was silent; perhaps it always would be silent. It was good for thinking, but there was no longer any point in thought.

How could he have overlooked all the clues that pointed—inescapably—to the fact that hedonics worked? His cold cured! His ulcers cured! Anyone who could do that could not be a quack.

But the proofs had rolled off his well-oiled mind.

Was he what Rush had called him? A materialist? If so, he could, at least, accept the testimony of his senses.

Hedonics worked. He could accept that. It worked physically: it had cured the incurable. It worked psychologically: it had turned Ethel into a radiantly happy woman.

He could accept, too, the inevitability of hedonics' conquest of the nation and after that the world. It was a juggernaut built out of humanity's eternal hopes; nothing could stop it. All over the United States people would be happy. All over the world people would be happy. Everybody would be happy.

Everybody but Joshua P. Hunt.

He took a sip of bourbon and let it slide down his throat and into his stomach. A twinge of pain made his stomach recoil; then it began to burn. It was a familiar sensation. His ulcers were back.

When happiness is for sale, only a fool will not buy.

Perhaps he was a materialist, but he wasn't a fool. He could swallow his pride.

He dialed P-L-E-A-S-U-R. . . .

"I'm sorry, Mr. Hunt," the girl said, and she actually sounded sorry. "The clause is in the contract, and we must abide by it for our own protection. Anyone who has broken a contract is ineligible for further participation. Otherwise, you see, there would be no end of people withdrawing and coming back, and the bookkeeping problems would be enormous. We must, of course, keep our incidental expenses to a minimum. You do understand, don't you, Mr. Hunt. . . .?"

The wire went dead.

Josh held the telephone for a long time after he had heard the connection broken before he remembered what its strange finality reminded him of.

The gates of paradise might sound like that as they clicked shut in front of the forever barred.

Don't forget—only ONE MONTH to wait for next issue's FANTASTIC UNIVERSE

good
to
be
a
Martian

by . . . Frank Belknap Long

Startlingly different was Twoon from most Martian youngsters. He actually dared to admire the bright, valiant deeds of Men!

MOTHER CARACAS called, "Twoon! Where are you, my darling?"

Twoon did not answer. He heard his mother calling, but how could he answer her when he was light-years from Mars, fighting his way through a forest vast and primeval on a planet of no return?

He heard his sister's voice, raised in triumphant mockery. "Twoon's playing Man again, Momsie! He's upstairs pretending he's a space explorer."

The little brat! A tattle-tale, that's what she was. Twoon drew himself up to his full height, and stared out through the attic window at the rust-red plains of Mars. And as he stared his fertile and feverish imagination began again to invest the drab, familiar landscape with the colors of an alien world. The flashing yellows and aquamarines of Algol's fifth planet, the desert colors and the polar ice cap colors—newly intermingled on the bright, incredible palette which every child, Martian or human, can evoke at the flick of a wand.

"Twoon! Aren't you ashamed?

When Frank Belknap Long's story, THE LITTLE MEN OF SPACE, appeared in the very first issue of FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, we were by no means sure that he would remain a steady contributor. So whimsically delightful was that yarn we secretly feared that the little men would capture him, and whisk him to realms unplumbed to spin his richly tapestried tales for a flying saucer audience. But on Earth he has remained, with his talents unfettered.

Your supper is getting cold. Come downstairs this minute. *Twoon.*"

Foolish woman, Twoon thought. What could his mother know of space rockets slim and resplendent in the dawn, the hushed voices of men bearded and earnest, and the comradeship that flowed like a heady wine into their veins as they faced hardships together—strong, tight-lipped fighters waging a never-ceasing battle against the unknown?

He wasn't Twoon on Algol's fifth planet. He was Richard Steele, tall and straight and lion-hearted. Twoon had never seen a lion, but he knew what it meant to be lion-hearted.

"Here's a microfilm book for you, Martian stripling. Sure, it's been translated into Martian. Part of our job is to widen the horizons of you kids a bit. There are a few old books among the new ones—and I happen to like the old books best. Literary Sam, they call me. I'm just a whack to most of them."

Literary Sam. He wasn't like the other Earthmen. He wore glasses and was almost as thin and scrawny, by Earth standards, as Twoon's father had been.

"Here, take this book home with you, Martian stripling, and read it at your leisure. I'm curious to see how much of the sparkle and color and drama and human warmth would get through to a Martian youngster."

The book was called "Richard the Lion-Hearted," and it had been written by—the syllables flowed

smoothly over Twoon's skillful phonetic tongue—Sir Walter Scott.

When Twoon shut his green-lidded eyes tight he could see the great and indomitable Richard trampling on his cloak in the bright sunlight of Earth, shouting at the top of his lungs: "I am Richard, your King! Is there one amongst you man enough to dispute my strength in unarmored combat?"

"Twoon!" shrilled his mother's voice despairingly, amidst the Sherwood Forest Knights and the shining trumpets. "I've baked some waffle muffins for you. You like them, don't you, darling?"

Well . . . He *did* like waffle muffins.

Almost reverently he folded his mesh-armor jerkin, and carried it to his locker aboard the rocket ship *Morning Star*. He saluted his commanding officer briskly in the passageway, exchanged winks with a pilot room buddy, and walked quickly to the stairwell—a stairwell in a far less glory-spangled world. He called down: "Coming, Mother!"

Mother Caracas waited for her son to seat himself at the kitchen table before she placed her bare right arm into the oven and withdrew the tray of delicious-looking waffle muffins.

"Twoon," she said, and her voice was reproachful. "You've been upstairs for two solid hours."

"I was reading, Momsie," he said.

"Oh, I wish those *Men* hadn't

given you a micro-film projector, and books to go with it. If you were a Man the books might not harm you. But we are *Martians*, darling. Never forget that. If you do you'll never know a moment of real contentment."

"Contentment," Twoon repeated, munching uncomprehendingly at a muffin. "Why do you always use that word, Momsie? I'm not sure I know what it means."

"You'll know what it means when you've lost it forever," Mother Caracas said, her eyes resting on her son in compassionate solicitude. "You'll understand then, darling—when it's too late."

"What's so bad about being a Man?" Twoon asked, reaching for another muffin. "They taught us a lot of things, Momsie—how to build bridges and tunnels, and houses like this. How to get to places fast, like when you want to call on a friend, and how to have fun playing games, and to stay healthy with injections of vitamins."

"Yes, they taught us some valuable things, Twoon. But they can never teach us anything about themselves we don't know already. There's harshness in them, Twoon, and cruelty and stupidity. Very few of them have ever known a moment of real contentment. And they don't like anyone to be different from themselves, to try to reach out for the kind of quiet happiness we had on Mars before the first Earth rocket arrived."

"I don't see why they don't Momsie."

"I'll tell you why, darling. When you've killed something beautiful in yourself you hate yourself for what you've done, and that hate makes a festering wound inside you. There's only one way of easing the hurt and the torment—finding someone who hasn't killed the beautiful something, someone who's different, and heaping scorn and ridicule upon him."

"Are all Men like that, Momsie?"

"Not all Men—but nearly all. Even the Men who aren't have a little of that maliciousness in them. On Earth there were a few Men, only a few, who refused to kill the beautiful something. They were called poets. They were hated so much they nearly all died in abject poverty, or were driven to self-destruction."

"Richard the Lion-Hearted was a Man," Twoon said, irrelevantly. "He was the strongest, bravest Man who ever lived. I wish I could be like him."

"There you go again!" Mother Caracas shook her head, her eyes grief-shadowed. "Strength, bravery! That's all the Earthmen ever talk about. I read a few chapters of that precious book of yours. Do you really think a Man like Richard ever walked the Earth? The Richard you admire was what Men call a legend. The real flesh-and-blood Richard was quite different. He was brutal, cruel, greedy. He trampled

on everyone who got in his way, and when he wanted something he took it.

"And just because he'd killed the beautiful something in himself he despised ordinary Men. In Richard's day most ordinary Men were wretchedly 'different'. They went about in rags and misery."

Twoon finished his waffle muffins in silence. Then he stood up and looked at his mother. "I'm going down to the spaceport," he said. "Literary Sam promised me another book."

Mother Caracas gazed at her son despairingly for an instant, then she picked up his empty plate and carried it to the sink.

"All right, Twoon," she said. "Someday you'll understand."

Twoon went out into the bright Martian sunlight. He ambled cheerfully over the broad walkway of shining plastic which meandered between the houses with all the resplendence of a quicksilver serpent gliding toward horizons measureless to Man. And as he ambled he pictured himself in a suit of chain armor, brandishing a Man-sized lance.

He was half-way to the spaceport when the Earth children came racing toward him. He had never seen them before and the yell of derision they gave when they caught sight of him so startled him that he halted abruptly in his tracks.

There were no Martians on the walkway, no *adult* Martians, that is, and the sight of Twoon standing

alone and unprotected seemed to fill the Earth children with an irresistible, sadistic delight. They came romping straight toward him—two boys and two girls—and began at once to shout at him, a wicked gleam in their eyes.

"Hey, how did you ever get to look like that?"

"Get off this walk, Green Ears. You hear? We don't want you on this walk. It's *our* walk."

"If you don't get off we'll push your face right down into the sand."

"You heard what Billy said, Green Ears. You're not human, and you've no right to be on our walk!"

"Yaa. Wart Ears, Green Ears! We'll take you apart."

"And see what makes Martians tick. They have cabbage leaves for brains."

"Sure they have. Everyone knows that."

"What'll we do to him if he doesn't get off?"

"He'll get off, don't worry."

The boy called Billy had big strong hands, and a pugnaciously overshot jaw.

He came up to Twoon and drew back his fist. "Are you getting off, Green Ears, or shall I let you have it right where it'll hurt?"

Twoon recoiled in quivering alarm. A vigorously delivered blow from a human fist—even a boy's fist—could have disastrous consequences to a Martian, wherever it might happen to land. He knew that it could, and he saw himself

lying dead on the sand, to his mother's everlasting sorrow.

Twoon had no cowardice in him. But he did desire to go on living, if only to spare his mother the grief which would surely come to her if she found him lying dead in the desert with his chest caved in.

"Make up your mind, Green Ears!" the boy called Billy said.

Twoon made up his mind. He turned quickly, and started to run, straight back along the walkway toward his home.

Immediately yells of triumph, frenzied and malicious, arose from behind him. "Look at him go! He don't even run like a Man!"

"Naw, Martians don't know how to run. They just get away fast as they can by squirming over the ground like centipedes."

"Are you going to let him get away, Billy?"

"Not without something to remember us by!" Billy shouted.

The stone struck Twoon behind his right ear, hurling him to the ground. With a sob he picked himself up, and ran on, a trickling, horrible wetness on the quivering flesh of his scalp.

When he arrived home he went straight to his room, took the micro-film projector and Richard the Lion-

Hearted to the waste disposal, and let the vacuum-suction in the depths of the tube carry both book and projector to everlasting night and oblivion.

Then he sat down in a chair by the window, and stared out over the rust-red plains of Mars.

He thought of his Uncle Tek, with his four abbreviated tentacles—mere greenish stumps they were like the gangrened limbs of space explorers who had suffered frost-bite—and of Aunt Geroris with her bulbous head and stalked eyes. He thought of his sister who had only two tentacles, long, willowy and very beautiful, and of how proudly his mother had gazed into his own sunken, disklike eyes when she had tucked him into bed in his infancy.

"A handsome son I have!"

No two Martians were ever in the least alike. But no Martian ever hated or derided another Martian just because he had fewer tentacles, or a coppery skin instead of a green one, or an extra eye in the middle of his forehead.

No Martian ever thought of another Martian as "different." There had been no need for that, and no real understanding of it even.

Oh, it was good to be a Martian.

WATCH FOR A NEW NOVELET BY LONG IN AN EARLY ISSUE

operation

in

free

orbit

by . . . F. B. Bryning

Try operating in space sometime
—without a surgeon's legs to
stand on in a deceleration whirl.

"WOOMERA CALLING Satellite
Space Station Commonwealth
Three! Woomera calling Satellite
Space Station Commonwealth
Three!"

Chief Radio-Radar Officer John Goodall started nervously, although he had been awaiting the call. He was, indeed, having dinner at his control board while standing by—a thing permissible only in an emergency.

He jerked his feed pipe out of his mouth and jammed the soup flask into its clip. But he was slow in letting go the spring lid held open for air intake. As a result, two globules of soup, one as big as a billiard ball and the other the size of a cherry, spun slowly in the air before him while his fingers found the tuning controls and put the call through to Astronomer-Commander Allison.

Goodall eyed the slowly spinning globules with disgust as he waited for A.-C. Allison. If there was one thing he and everyone else in the Station knew by heart, it was the *Space Manual's* Chapter Five—"Precautions in Dealing With Liquids in the Weightless Conditions of Free Orbit." Yet he, like

Almost alone among science-fiction practitioners of established reputation, F. B. Bryning, a gifted young Australian author, brings his matchless gifts of ingenuity and scientific know-how to one focus—shiningly clear. He writes with stark, documentary realism about the courage and tribulations, the hardships and endurance, of men facing death in the gulfs between worlds.

everyone else, was constantly being caught out.

Astronomer-Commander Allison acknowledged the call. Hands still moving over his controls, Goodall watched with anguish as the soup balls, drifting to the ventilation duct, veered towards the intricate wiring of his new radar control panel, not yet completely enclosed. He squirmed at the thought of what that greasy fluid might do to the delicate and complex assembly.

In another second he had the two-way call tuned pretty well, so he unclipped his chair belt, slipped his foot loops, whipped off his earphones, and, with a light spring, dived after the soup globules.

He reached the smaller one first, and, pursing his lips, sucked it smoothly into his mouth. By then he had floated past the larger globule, which swung into the gentle slip-stream behind him. Checking himself against the radar panel, he turned quickly in defense. He sighted the ball of soup just as it broke softly against the bridge of his nose and flowed affectionately over his face.

Holding his breath and keeping his head still so as not to shake the soup into a swarm of tiny droplets, he carefully drew out his handkerchief, opened it wide, and laid it against his face. As the liquid soaked through he mopped gently until he had caught the last drop.

Able to see again, he quickly dived back to his chair, hooked his feet into the loops, and grabbed

the earphones which had been swaying about at the end of their flex like the head of a cobra . . .

" . . . forty-five minutes ago," Woomera was saying, "three hours earlier than expected, because a certain Dr. Gale, who is not in the Service, has volunteered. It should reach you, therefore, approximately four hours five minutes from now. Can the patient hold out until then?"

"Believe so," replied A.-C. Allison. "He is organizing his biology laboratory into an operating theatre. He says he will operate on himself if your doctor does not arrive in time. Meanwhile his main concern is to anticipate the difficulties of the surgeon in the weightless conditions here. Has Dr. Gale any experience of space? You said he was not in the service?"

"My only information is that Dr. Gale has volunteered in this emergency since Dr. Bond is away on leave and Dr. McAuliffe has been grounded after a heart test yesterday. Suggest you assume Dr. Gale has no experience of free fall and prepare accordingly."

"We shall," replied Allison. "Any other information?"

"Yes. Calculation of computers just to hand. Emergency rocket with doctor aboard will cut your orbit close to your position at 1557 hours Adelaide time. That is, exactly four hours two minutes from now."

* * *

Astronomer-Commander Allison

sat frowning across his desk at the blue-filmed segment of Earth which almost filled the view through the periscopic porthole. So near, it looked, for all the 22,300 miles distance, but in the five hours it took the emergency rocket to bring the doctor, a sick man could die.

Better not to think about it.

Allison put out a hand to the intercom, then drew it back. Unclipping his chair belt, he eased himself up, poised horizontally, gripping the edge of his desk, and sighted across the room. Pushing lightly with his hands, he floated over the desk to the door.

Surgeon-Biologist Kennedy's plump face behind his moderate air-force type moustache was unwontedly pale and drawn. He lay propped up on his improvised operating table, safety belts across his thighs and shins to hold him in position. A large mirror, borrowed from the Station's bathroom, was rigged up at an angle above his knees so that he could see his waistline in it.

Extra lighting units had been rigged on the ceiling above him, and anaesthetic apparatus was lashed to the head of the table. Along one side of him was a second table, and across the foot of this and his own table was a third. The two latter tables were covered with clean linen upon which were pinned two parallel tapes fastened every few inches. Under the taut loops so formed an array of surgical instruments was held down. Under other

and bigger loops were sundry laboratory utensils and surgical dishes with transparent covers, plastic bags filled with cotton swabs, folded surgical towels, and other equipment.

Surgeon-Biologist Kennedy was checking his instruments, and three other young men clad in white—one his assistant biologist, one a nuclear physicist, and the other Goodall's assistant radio-radar officer—were doing his bidding, their faces grim.

"Four pairs Mayo's towel clips," read Kennedy.

"Here," replied Assistant Biologist Phelan, laying a rubber-gloved hand beside the clips.

"Bard Parker's knife."

"Here."

"Toothed dissecting forceps."

"Here."

"Mayo's dissecting scissors . . . Plain dissecting forceps . . . One dozen Spencer Wells artery forceps . . . Duval's tissue forceps—"

He broke off as A. C. Allison floated into the room. Holding to the doorknob, Allison swung himself down so that his magnetic undersoles gripped the floor.

"The rocket will be here in four hours with a volunteer surgeon aboard—a Dr. Gale—no experience of space. Can you hold out until then?"

Kennedy nodded, and managed a thin smile. "If I can't I'll go ahead myself."

"You still consider that feasible?"

"No alternative! It has been done before, you know."

"In free fall?"

Kennedy shrugged: "I'll be the first, if I must. Fortunately for me, Sandeman's localizing technique has made spinal anaesthesia safe in the absence of gravity."

"But what if you should pass out in the middle of the job?" asked Allison.

"That would be a pity, no doubt. But in any event, even with a qualified surgeon operating, I shall certainly have that spinal anaesthetic and stay awake to help him work for the first time in free fall. Weightlessness is bound to haze him quite a bit. 'Gale,' did you say? I don't know the name. Why not McAuliffe or Bond?"

"McAuliffe has been grounded—heart not up to scratch on a test yesterday," said Allison. "Bond is on leave."

"Well—everything's taped or pinned down here, and I've drilled Phelan and Hough and Reeves in handling swabs and forceps. Phelan won't have to be anaesthetist, since I'll be having the spinal, so there'll be three assistants. There are foot loops on the floor for the surgeon, and a belt and clip to hold him against the table. He'll work more slowly than usual, I suppose, but his only real difficulty will be our usual one of dealing with liquids—in particular with hemorrhaging.

"I don't mind admitting I'm worried about how a surgeon with-

out experience of free fall will cope with bleeding for the first time—with spurting arterial blood in particular. That's why I must remain conscious"

Surgeon-Biologist Kennedy's face contracted and went a degree whiter as he gripped the edges of his table in a spasm of pain. Moments later he managed a tired grin. "After all," he added, "it's my very own blood!"

Normally the weekly supply rocket would come out from Earth in nineteen hours on a synergic curve that laid her accurately and unobtrusively close against the orbit of the Station. A little ahead or astern of the Station, her speed matched within 100 m.p.h., plus or minus, of the Station's speed, she would arrive unseen and notify her arrival by radio. Then, with a flutter or two of steering jets, fore and aft, she would adjust her speed and sidle in against the Station.

Wasteful of all but time, the emergency rocket was more spectacular. Flaring three times the length of the ship itself, the braking blast was a tight, quivering pencil of yellow-white flame that neither mushroomed nor wavered in the airless, black void.

At first it appeared far ahead and inside the Station's orbit. In three minutes the Station had come up close, and the rocket ship itself appeared, like the gleaming haft of a 300-foot sword of flame. As it lunged slowly to a stop a mile or so off the plane of the Station's eclips-

tic, the blast was cut and the rocket lost to sight.

Minutes later, navigation lights only visible, the rocket overtook the Station at a plus differential speed of about 500 m.p.h. There followed a few minutes' orchestration with braking and steering jets until speeds were matched perfectly.

Through the inner doorway of the Station's airlock the doctor goosestepped, magnetics clumping and arms waving awkwardly. Astronomer-Commander Allison stepped forward at once with a welcoming smile, caught the doctor's right hand as it swung up shoulder high, and gripped it warmly.

Signalling to Senior Meteorologist James Kneebone to help, Allison began at once to remove the doctor's transparent helmet. He lifted the helmet off as Kneebone unzipped the suit.

"We're more than glad to welcome you, Dr. Gale!"

Hands freed from the sleeves and gloves of the space suit, the doctor's first action was to peel off a rubber skull cap.

"Thank you, Commander. Excuse me—this cap is most uncom—"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed A.-C. Allison. "A woman . . .!"

A woman—young, blonde, and extremely good-looking. Two thick braids of golden hair encircled her head like a halo. She flashed a smile at Allison.

"Sorry to have startled you, Commander. Didn't Woomera explain?"

"Our surprise is a more than pleasant one," said Allison gallantly.

"Thank you!" she beamed at him, essayed a small bow, and immediately was forced to clutch at him to repair her balance. "Oh, dear! I have lots to learn. And I don't dare step out of this." She indicated her space suit, collapsed about her hips like a crumpled cocoon. "But tell me—how is the patient? Are we short of time?"

"You and he will know best," replied Allison. "We'll take you to him at once. Permit me . . ."

He held her by the shoulders while Kneebone stripped the space suit down to her ankles. She was wearing the standard one-piece neck-to-ankle siren suit which, alternatively with the cooler shirt and shorts outfit, was normal wear in space craft.

"We'll manage you," said Allison. "Usually we 'swim' from room to room about the Station. The magnetics are necessary only when outside, or when moving about inside with things in your hands."

As she floated up from the suit Allison and Kneebone held her lightly by the arms. Then stooping together, they removed their magnetics, slung them in clips at their waists, and dived with her towards the door.

Surgeon-Biologist Kennedy's eyebrows went up, and his trainees Phelan, Hough, and Reeves exchanged startled glances as Dr. Gale was brought into the room.

"Dr. Kennedy—," said A.C. Allison, promptly cutting through all speculation. "Dr. Gale."

Kennedy took hold of his wits at once. His pain-drawn face broadened into a smile, and his eyes shone as he held out his hand.

"Dr. Gale—I am more than grateful—I can't say how grateful I am to you for risking and enduring the trip out here on my behalf."

She caught his hand as they swung her down, buckled on magnetics, and stood her by the improvised operating table.

"It is I who thank you, Dr. Kennedy, for an opportunity given to few women even yet—a trip into space. Now, how much time have we?"

"The sooner you operate the better," replied Kennedy. "But there's time for you to have some refreshment and to prepare. Here's the chart."

"I made sure to eat just before leaving the rocket," said Dr. Gale as she took the chart. "I can be ready in a few moments. All I need is to check over the instruments and the duties of my assistants"—she flashed a smile at the three—"then change into overalls, and wash up."

"Oh, sorry—" said Dr. Kennedy, and he introduced Phelan, Hough, and Reeves. "We'll get better acquainted and put the etiquette in order after this is over. Now, Dr. Gale, how do you feel after space sickness? I can see you have had more than a touch."

She looked up sharply, and the two doctors stared coolly into one another's eyes.

"I didn't know it was showing," she admitted with a smile. "You must tell me later how to read the signs. However, I treated myself, and later on had a dry meal. That was before the deceleration. Just before leaving the rocket I took some glucose, and I'm full of energy for the time being. My hand will not shake or my knees wobble, I assure you."

As they spoke A.C. Allison quietly passed the belt around Dr. Gale and clipped it to the table as Kennedy had provided. Kneebone and Allison moved back, leaving her standing there, feet held by the magnetics and floor loops, and waist held to the table. She studied the chart.

"I understand, Dr. Kennedy," she said, without looking up, "that you were prepared to operate on yourself by virtue of a spinal anaesthetic. I am here to relieve you of that dire expedient, but if you would still desire to have a spinal and direct the operation by means of your mirror, I shall have no objection."

She signalled to Phelan for the thermometer. "On the other hand, if you will take a total anaesthetic, for which I see you have also prepared, I am quite confident that I shall have no difficulties."

"I wouldn't dream of directing your surgery in any circumstances, Dr. Gale," replied Kennedy. "And

I am intensely relieved at not having to hazard an operation on myself. I am weary and shaky to a degree I could not have admitted before. But there are so many unexpected happenings when everything is weightless that it is too much to expect anyone without experience of free fall to anticipate them. So, if it will not embarrass you, I fancy I could help a lot if I took the spinal and remained awake."

She nodded agreement as she drew the thermometer out of the plastic bag of cotton wool saturated in antiseptic.

"I know that most difficult of all is to deal with liquids, as witness this ingenious device for sterilizing the thermometer. Also, I suppose those sponges in the plastic bags over there are for sterilizing the surgeon's hands? I think you must have thought of everything, Dr. Kennedy. Open your mouth, please."

Kennedy held her wrist for a moment. "I've tried to, of course," he said. "But your worst problem will be to deal with bleeding during the operation—particularly with the spurting of arterial blood. Can you imagine—uh!"

She had put the thermometer in his mouth and held up a warning finger while taking his wrist to time the pulse. Only after releasing the wrist and adding a note to the chart did she look up, and then her eyes were twinkling.

"*Space Manual—Chapter Five:*

"The problems of working with liquids in the weightless conditions of free fall are as many and varied as the uses to which liquids may be put, and are constantly presenting themselves in new guises," she quoted.

"While the main principles may be stated simply, particular necessities arising from time to time cause a never-ending elaboration of techniques. Moreover, not only is it essential to maintain a constant vigilance over actions which have become habitual in normal gravity, but it is necessary to think out in advance every new action and reaction before it is embarked upon . . . and so forth."

Dr. Gale smiled at sight of the thermometer weaving about in Kennedy's mouth.

"Now before I take that thermometer out for you to tell me that the ability to quote the *Manual* is not the same as acting upon it, let me say that I am acutely aware of that as a result of my experiences on the way out, in the rocket."

"But tell me," asked Kennedy when she took out the thermometer, "what do you know about hemorrhaging in weightless conditions? The *Manual* merely points out—"

"That 'owing to the paucity of surgical experience in free fall there are, no doubt, many surgical problems in dealing with liquids, medicaments, hemorrhages, etc., which will await solution until practical need in some emergency obliges the

surgeon to improvise . . . and so on," she quoted.

"Forgive me for taking the words out of your mouth—but it is clear that very few surgeons have had any experience of operating in weightless conditions. You have probably as much as anyone?"

She watched his face.

Kennedy shrugged. "Minor casualties mostly. Men fitting up the Station, gashing themselves with tools, and that sort of thing."

"Then will you check my understanding of it, please?" She returned the thermometer to Phelan. "In normal bleeding the blood will well up into a globule about the size of a grape. Then the slightest movement of the air or of the patient sends it off into the air, where it may or may not break up into a number of smaller ones. Meanwhile, another globule wells up, and another . . . Hasty swabbing will scatter it into a spray of droplets before it can be absorbed by the swab."

Kennedy was nodding approvingly. "And when an artery—?"

"Arterial blood which spurts becomes a rapidly growing spray of droplets rather smaller than peas, but with an initial velocity away from the wound. It is better to trap them in a large concave swab six inches to a foot away than to try to swab right on the wound, which sends them in all directions. Of course, pressure on the artery to cut off the supply should be applied as soon as possible . . . I suppose you

have instructed my assistants in the art of swabbing?"

"Most certainly."

"And in preparing and sterilizing the area of the operation? May I inspect it please?"

She beckoned Hough to bring her the plastic bags with the sponges in them, and a towel. Hough slipped the bags over her forearms and drew them tight at her elbows.

"Where did you get all that about bleeding in weightless conditions?" Kennedy asked. "*The Lancet*—some recent periodical? I didn't know anything had been published yet. I was thinking of doing something of the sort myself."

"I don't know of anything other than the *Manual*." She shook her head. "That will do, thank you," she said to Hough, who carefully slid the sponge bag down her right arm, keeping the neck tight against the skin. As he dried her arm she continued to squeeze the sponges in the bag on her left arm. To Kennedy she added: "I sort of—well—worked on the problem on the way out here."

Kennedy looked at her in frank puzzlement as she examined the hypodermic needle. "Your deductions are remarkably accurate, Dr. Gale," he acknowledged. "I don't know how you could have so clearly visualized what actually occurs. For a space-sick novice on her first trip out you have achieved a mental *tour de force*."

"Dr. Kennedy, you flatter me. I could not have deduced all that. I—I observed it."

"Don't tell me you had an operation to perform on the way—some casualty to patch up—one of the crew—"

"Not exactly." Dr. Gale laughed as she motioned him to roll down his sheet. "No such luck."

With cool and gentle finger-tips she explored the region of his pain, and confirmed his own diagnosis of appendicitis.

"Have you any reason to suspect adhesions?" she asked him.

"None whatever."

"Then I'd suggest McBurney's muscle-splitting approach, with a short incision parallel to the outer end of Poupart's ligament," she said, replacing the sheet across his chest. "You don't want a long paramedian cut, do you?"

"Thank you, Doctor," he grinned, "for your regard for my good looks."

"We'll start at once," she announced, undoing the belt. "Dr. Kennedy, will you and Mr. Phelan prepare your hypodermic with the spinal injection please? Mr. Hough, I shall want you to help me off with this siren suit. Bring the sterilizer bags please, and don't feel embarrassed. I'm wearing the regulation shorts and shirt underneath."

Kennedy's hand received the hypodermic syringe from Phelan but his eyes remained on her as she plodded awkwardly in the mag-

netics. Then he beckoned Allison and Kneebone.

"I doubt if I could be in better hands, if only she had experience in space," he whispered. "But I'll be helping her in that. I don't suppose you chaps want to stay?"

Emphatically they shook their heads.

"Dr. Gale!" came the voice of Hough, raised in alarm. "Your foot—it's covered in blood!"

"Oh, damn!" exclaimed Dr. Gale, taken off guard. "It's nothing, really—only a scratch. This is no time to fuss about a trifle."

In shorts, shirt, sockettes, and light slippers, Dr. Gale was a most delectable sight to every man there. Undeniably, though, her right sockette was soaked in blood. In the moment of general surprise she was quick to cover up.

"Mr. Hough," she said, turning to the bulkhead where the surgeon's cap, mask, and overalls were clipped on to the handrail by which she was holding herself to the floor, "my cap first, please."

But Kennedy's voice cut in quietly. "Let me see that foot please, Dr. Gale."

She smiled over her shoulder. "It's nothing, I assure you, Dr. Kennedy. Please don't let us waste any more time."

"I insist on seeing that foot," said Kennedy, and he turned to Allison and Kneebone. "Bring her here, will you? Manhandle her if necessary—but gently!"

"Don't you realize you're the sick

one?" she protested to Kennedy as Allison and Kneebone laid hands on her. "And that time is precious?"

"Five minutes more won't hurt me," said Kennedy as he laid the hypodermic in his lap.

Riding lightly as a feather between the two space men, Dr. Gale favored her patient with a somewhat petulant glare.

"Please put out your foot."

Compressing her lips, she put out a shapely leg. In silence Dr. Kennedy gently rolled down the blood-soaked sockette.

"You see," she said, "it's really nothing. Bleeding has stopped and that penicillin patch is as tight as ever. I suppose it must have pulled away a bit during the deceleration, but it's quite sealed up again. Now may I get on with cutting you open?"

"You may," said Kennedy, grinning at the playful menace in her words, "as soon as you tell me how that happened."

"You're in no position to make bargains like that," she warned him as they wafted her back to Hough. "I can hold out longer than you."

"True," he admitted. "But tell me, anyway, while I fix this hypo."

"So you can add another item, I suppose, to your monograph on *'Surgical Hazards in Free Fall.'* Mr. Hough—the overalls please."

In silence Hough held the overalls before her, and when she had put in her arms he moved around to tie up behind her.

"I'm still waiting," prompted Kennedy.

She sighed, but took her time before replying. "You are very inquisitive, Dr. Kennedy," she said at last. "And so am I. I just *had* to know how arterial blood would behave in weightless conditions. It was either persuade one of the crew to submit to vivisection or—well—I did what you would have done."

He looked at her.

"You opened the anterior tibial artery in your own instep!"

"When I found out what I needed I drew the incision together and sealed it with the penicillin patch. If it hadn't been for the several gravities deceleration pulling the skin away from the patch there'd have been no further bleeding and no fuss about it . . ." She turned her back on the room. "Mr. Hough—the sponge bags please."

Dr. Kennedy looked silently around his improvised operating theatre at each of his colleagues in turn. Then he swallowed hard and spoke humbly.

"Dr. Gale—before you sterilize again may I have the privilege of shaking you by the hand once more? Nothing I could say can thank you enough for the risks you have already run on my behalf."

He settled back on his pillow and held up the hypodermic. "You can take back this syringe, Phelan—and get that mirror out of the way. I'm going to have a total anaesthetic."

the figment

by . . . Arthur Sellings

A man must be of sound mind to make light of a ghostly visitor. Even then he may find himself in the deadliest kind of danger.

IF IT HADN'T been for the way the strangest of individuals entered his study Digby would have taken him for an ordinary human being. He would, it is true, have been surprised, and even indignant, at such an invasion of his privacy. But his reaction would have been far more normal.

The intruder did not come unheralded, any more than does *delirium tremens*. The unfortunate sufferer from that grievous affliction knows the instant his eyes lift to the foot of his bed that he is going to see snakes or beetles or some other ghastly figment of a mind distraught. The image is there waiting, and he lifts his eyes to it with the dreadful inevitability of Greek tragedy.

It was in such a manner that Digby said to himself, "Suppose suddenly through my open door should enter a man with pink eyes and white hair—an albino, in short!"

And he looked up, and there through the doorway actually came a man with pink eyes and white hair. It was as simple as that.

It isn't often that a story of spectral dread glows with quite such modern overtones of Freudian psychology and wild surmise as this venture into the unthinkable by a brilliant young English writer whose work is now gracing the pages of America's leading science-fantasy magazines. It's quite unique, too, in another respect. It's told with a lively and chilling awareness of the other fellow's viewpoint, the other fellow being—the ghost himself!

In the silence that ensued, a succession of logically connected thoughts passed through Digby's head. None of them involved a suspension of disbelief, nor even any question of his own sanity, such as might have occurred to an ordinary man.

For Digby was no ordinary man. He was a logician, a scholar. Being such, he was cool, skeptical, intellectually arrogant. He knew that he didn't know everything, but that what couldn't be explained by ordinary common sense and the logic of events rarely turned up. In fact, nothing that Digby couldn't satisfactorily explain had ever turned up in his life before. So he addressed himself to the apparition in a level voice:

"You are a delusion. Please go."

The remark revealed that Digby carried rather more of the primitive in him than he suspected, for it implied that exorcism by verbal injunction might occasionally work. It was only to be expected that after he opened his eyes, after blinking them once furiously, the albino was still there. It had, moreover, a pained expression on its face.

"Please don't call me a delusion," it said. "I am a figment."

Heavens! thought Digby, *he says it as if he's proud of the fact.*

"Delusion, figment, there's no difference," Digby flung back.

"On the contrary," said his visitor politely, but firmly, "there's a world of difference. Consider judiciously the connotations of each

word. *Delusion*," he winced at having to speak the word, "connotes loss, lunacy, looseness. Whereas *figment*—man, think of the ripeness, the wholeness of it! The *realness* of it. It's from the Latin, of course, and means to *shape*—*figo*, *figere*—"

"*Finxi, factum*," Digby finished for him triumphantly. "*Fiction. Make-believe.*"

"Well, what of it? It only shows that other cultures recognized the worth of the dreamer. The word *poet* meant a *maker* in the Greek."

"Bah, you amateur etymologists. You make words mean anything that suits your convenience. You remind me of an article I once read that maintained that the Arabic *l* and *r* are interchangeable, that therefore Ararat was really Allah's Lat, and that the story of the Ark was a phallic myth."

"Interesting," mused the figment. "As a matter of fact, in Arabic the—"

"I don't want to hear," said Digby, annoyed at the pretensions of the creature. "All right, you *are* a figment. I *have* been working rather hard lately. Evidently overstrain has set up some slight disorder in my perceptive apparatus. You are just a symbol of some minor conflict in my psyche."

"Hah! That's a good one. Here—" The figment stretched out its hand. "Feel."

Digby shrank from contact with the horror.

The figment grinned. "Why

don't you shake hands? It should convince you beyond all reasonable doubt."

"Because," said Digby warily, "you may well be as hallucinatory to the touch as to sight and hearing. Besides, I don't shake hands with strangers."

The figment looked pained again. "But didn't you get my message? Really now! You're not the kind of person who habitually says, 'Suppose a man with white hair and pink eyes came through that door,' are you?"

"Of course not," Digby spluttered.

The figment sighed in relief. "Good, I thought not. There are quite a few people like that, you know, always day-dreaming about what might happen *if*. There are more around today than ever. And they're just no good at all. They wouldn't even recognize my message. I was sure I'd picked the right man in you. But just for one moment there you had me rattled."

"The right man?" said Digby, feeling a sudden disquiet. "For what?"

The figment smiled. "*Please*. I wouldn't dream of asking you about your work unless you told me of your own accord. We figments have a keen sense of etiquette, you know."

"In that case, why don't you leave when you're not welcome," Digby said shortly.

The figment hoisted its shoulders in a gesture of heartfelt apology.

"I beg you not to glare at me like that. It really hurts me. After all, we all have our role in the scheme of things. You are a civilized man, for instance, but you don't question your own purpose when you lift a stick of asparagus to your lips at the dinner table. Nor do you question the obedient role of the asparagus. But if the stick were suddenly to say '*Why?*' you would think it rather impertinent, wouldn't you?"

"How dare you compare me to a stick of asparagus! An *impertinence*, you say?" Digby's face flushed with anger.

"Tsk-tsk," said the figment sadly. "I'm surprised at you. I was not referring to manners, but to seemliness. Anyway," he added with an enigmatic smile, "I'm not going to *eat* you."

He had wandered over to the bookshelves. "Mm-mm, nice library you have here. Whitehead, Russell—ah, and the Arabian Nights. Quite my favorite book. In the Mardus-Mathers translation, too. Much the best, in my opinion—though I should have thought you might have preferred the Burton. The erotic footnotes, you know."

By now Digby had recovered his speech and composure, which he had lost at the spectacle of the figment's confounded presumption.

"Look here! Inspecting a scholar's bookshelves is a compliment when it comes from a guest. When it comes from an intruder it's nothing short of damned impudence."

The figment seemed not to hear him. "Delicious stories. Such a sage blending of folk-lore and the eternal truths, of the celestial and the delicious joys of the flesh." He sighed nostalgically as he mentioned the word *flesh*, seeming to quiver sensually at the same time in a manner which Digby found wholly revolting.

"I read the *Thousand and One Nights*," said Digby coldly, "for quite different reasons. I am a classical scholar."

The figment winked gravely. "All scholars are frustrated voluptuaries, especially the classical ones. It's a matter of sublimation. Still, let's not be personal. You're a scholar, I'm a figment. With that fact clearly recognized and established, let's try to get on as best we can. What do you say?"

"What I say is that I shall see a psychiatrist in the morning. I'll soon get rid of you, my fine fellow."

"Psychiatrists are witch-doctors, I assure you," said the figment suavely. "De-odorized witch-doctors. I feel rather sorry for them myself. Go by all means, old man, but they won't be an atom of use to you."

"Ah, do you think I'd take *your* advice. It obviously wouldn't be in your interests if I did. Like all primitive bogies which lurk in the subconscious you no doubt have a strong instinct for self-preservation."

The figment smiled. "Well, if that's the way you feel. But frankly,

I don't think you will." He looked at his wrist. "Well, I'm afraid I shall have to go now. I don't really *have* to, of course, but as I said, we figments have a keen sense of etiquette and the social graces. I've enjoyed our chat."

Digby heaved a sigh of relief. He was beginning to fear that the creature had taken up a permanent abode in his perceptive mechanism. But he had enough sense to conceal the sigh and to grunt, almost civilly, "Well, good-bye, then."

"Oh, not good-bye," leered the figment. "*Au revoir*." It bowed and disappeared.

The figment re-appeared the next evening, just as Digby was preparing to retire.

"You didn't go to the witch-doctor, then?" it said urbanely.

"What the devil's concern is that of yours? As a matter of fact, I didn't."

"I was sure you wouldn't, old man. I'm glad you took my advice."

Digby controlled his temper with an effort. To lose it, he thought, would be to sacrifice a moral victory to a detestable hallucinatory knave.

"Your advice had nothing to do with it. The reason I *didn't* consult a psychiatrist was a logically—motivated one. I'm convinced now you're not a figment of my imagination at all."

"Oh, I've never claimed that," said the figment airily, leaning its elbow on the mantelpiece. "Just a figment—period. I've been a fig-

ment to other people quite frequently in the past."

"Oh, no," said Digby. "I won't let you split hairs with me like that. Heaven knows what form of incorporeal snobbery leads you to make such a pointless distinction. But the fact remains that you're just a spook, just some miserable half-being hovering between the real and the phantasmal. You are no more a projection of my mind than you were of the other minds you've pestered, by your own confession, in the past. My first hasty opinion may have been that you were a delusion. But I am simply not the type of person to have delusions. *Ergo*, you're a ghost, an apparition of a very ugly nature."

"Well, have it your own way," said the figment calmly. "If you prefer to believe that I'm merely a—*a ghost*," it uttered the word contemptuously, "that's up to you. But you will agree, I think, that the truth is easily proved."

"I have no wish to prove it," said Digby stiffly, picking up a newspaper and glancing at it ostentatiously. There was no sense in reasoning with the creature. The only sane thing to do was to treat it with indifference, until it got bored and went off to pester somebody else. Wearing it down might take a time, he thought grimly, but he knew who would be the first to weaken.

He was quite surprised when after some minutes he glanced up from his paper to find that the fig-

ment had vanished. He had thought it made of sterner stuff than that. He felt almost disappointed at the ease of his unexpected victory.

But the figment was not so easily banished. It turned up the next morning as Digby was walking to the university, and fell into step beside him, smiling infuriatingly.

"Will you please go away," Digby hissed, looking straight in front of him and making as little movement of his lips as possible.

"I'm afraid I can't, old man," said the figment. "Pursuit of truth and all that."

Digby pursed his lips and increased his pace, telling himself to keep calm, to repeat his indifference of the night before.

He didn't spot the distinguished chairman of the Mathematics Department until it was too late. Dr. Butler came fluttering round his usual corner, and Digby cursed his stupidity in not having guarded against such a contingency by setting off on a different route the instant the figment had shown up.

"Morning, Digby," Butler quavered. "It's a beautiful morning, isn't it?"

"Oh—yes, indeed," said Digby, throwing a quick glance over his left shoulder. The figment was still there, grinning maddeningly. It had halted abruptly at Digby's side, as if waiting to be introduced. Digby ignored it, turning angrily away, and walking on toward the campus with Butler at his heels.

"I was reading Franck's new book

last night," said Butler. "The way that he deals with—"

At that moment the figment broke across Butler's reedy voice to whisper in Digby's ear: "You see, *he* doesn't see me. He shows no surprise at not being introduced to me. He's talking away like the chattering idiot he is, and he doesn't even hear me. So I can't very well be a ghost, can I?"

"That doesn't necessarily follow," snapped Digby.

"Eh?" said Butler, somewhat taken aback by Digby's vehemence, for he was a gentle man who had spent all his life on the pacific battlefield of higher mathematics. "But you've always agreed with me, Digby, on precisely the point I was discussing. I don't understand—"

"I'm sorry," Digby said hastily. "I was thinking of something else."

"Oh," said Butler huffily. "I thought Franck's new hypothesis would interest you."

"Oh, indeed it does," Digby assured him. "But not at the moment. I'm rather preoccupied. You see—" He broke off, taking another quick glance over his shoulder. The figment was still pacing along beside him.

"I say, Butler." He swallowed. "Do you believe there could be such a thing—" No, he couldn't say it. Why should he discuss it when it was obvious Butler *couldn't* see the figment at all. But dammit! It was more than just a delusion in his

own brain. He wasn't going to accept the wretched albino's self-important view of itself. Butler's inability to see it was no proof at all of its objective non-existence. Some people were simply more sensitive and perceptive in such matters.

"Yes?" said Butler, looking oddly at Digby. "Do I believe *what*?"

Digby recovered his presence of mind hurriedly. "I'm afraid I phrased it a bit awkwardly. I was just going to ask you if there's a chance of your coming to supper this evening."

Butler's gaze strayed away. He was still patently put out by Digby's rebuff but however ingenious he might be at higher math he was innocent as a babe socially. The best excuse he could think of on the spur of the moment was, "Well, I'm rather busy on my new paper, you know. I don't imagine—"

"Please," Digby entreated. He'd show the wretched figment he was master of the situation. He had just conceived a brilliant plan of action that would eventually thwart the creature. "I've something important to talk over with you, and I'd greatly appreciate your advice."

Mollified, Butler said, "We-ell, all right, then. I can put the paper aside for one evening, I suppose."

That evening when Mrs. Martin, the housekeeper, had cleared the table, washed the dishes and left, Digby told Butler the whole story. Only a man supremely confident of his own sanity could have told it as coolly as he did to someone who,

like Butler, had no occult leanings at all.

"Dear, dear," said Butler at the completion of the tale. "I'm sorry for you, Digby. Why don't you—er—see someone. You know what I mean?"

"Ah," said Digby, "but that would be giving in."

"Well, I'm afraid I couldn't help you at all," said Butler as if he were confessing an inability greatly to his credit.

"But you *can*," Digby's eyes had a reckless gleam. "I'm going to summon him now."

Butler coughed and stared nervously around him. "Can you do that?"

"Well, I haven't done so yet," conceded Digby. He added smugly, "but I'm quite sure I can. If the creature doesn't turn up I'm confident it won't trouble me again. I shall have called its bluff."

He prepared to concentrate on a mental injunction to the creature to appear—or face everlasting disgrace. But before he had even started, it materialized behind Butler's chair with its infuriating grin firmly in evidence.

"No need to call, old man," it whispered, chidingly. "I *knew*. What can I do for you?"

Digby thought of several things it would have given him the greatest satisfaction to see it do, but with an effort he restrained himself.

"Just stand over here where Professor Butler can see you."

"Right here, you mean?" said

the figment, moving obediently to the spot indicated.

Butler did not even rise. He only followed with some alarm the direction of Digby's gaze as the figment moved across the floor.

"Now," said Digby to Butler. "He's here. Tell me honestly. Can you see him?"

"No," said the bewildered Butler.

"Nor hear him, of course?"

Butler shook his head, emphatically.

"Right," said Digby. "Well, you can take my word for it, he's *there*. He's standing in the middle of that cluster of roses, in the precise center of the carpet."

"Ye-es," Butler said dubiously.

"Now, it's all a matter of individual perception. I'm going to prove to you that this thing has objective existence. It's about five-feet-nine or ten, albino, as I told you, it is wearing a gray suit. Its habitual expression is an idiotic grin. Can you see it now?"

Butler cleared his throat, and adjusted his pince-nez. "I—I'm afraid not," he said, after a few seconds of squinting hard at the spot Digby had indicated.

"Try again," Digby said confidently.

Butler looked hard. Then he swallowed. "Wait a moment—"

"Yes?"

"Good Lord," said Butler. "I do believe that— Yes, it's as you say. Albino, gray suit—" He had been speaking over his shoulder, his eyes

glued to the spot where the figment had suddenly materialized for him. Now he turned to Digby. "It's the most amazing thing—" Butler stopped in abrupt alarm. "Digby? Digby. Where are you? What sort of game is this?"

But Digby couldn't answer him. He was floating in a strange void, an utterly new world, and he had no idea of how to begin communicating with that vast area of reality he had hitherto regarded as the real world. But he could see it—as if through mirrors that distorted everything in a way he couldn't quite analyze. And he could hear it, though sounds seemed to reverberate down invisible, eerily echoing corridors before they reached him.

He saw the figment heave a deep sigh of contentment, and heard it address Butler in condoling tones.

"I'm afraid, sir, that your friend has been—translated. You see, the instant he convinced another person, yourself, of my reality, I was legitimized, so to speak. After all, a thing is either subjective or objective. Until now, I've been living in a wretched subjective world. But a figment can't be subjective to two people, can it? So at the moment he convinced you of my existence, I became objective—*actual*."

"But—my friend?" faltered Butler. "What of him?"

The one-time figment spread his hands in a gesture of heartfelt regret. "There's a law of conservation in the universe. I'm sure that you, as a scientist, will appreciate that. You can't get something for nothing in this man's world, eh, Professor? Immediately I materialized I'm afraid your friend, ah, *de-materialized*."

The abominable creature sighed. "In fact, at this moment Professor Digby is himself a figment. But he will learn, a capable chap like him. It may take time, a few million years perhaps, but I'm sure Digby's not a man to be thwarted by a small detail like that."

And the creature, with the expertness of one long acquainted with the geometry of contact between the real and the figmentary worlds, looked straight at Digby—and winked.

Digby raved impotently. But having by this time arrived at some understanding of his new environment, he was able to move quickly away from the scene of his disastrously humiliating downfall. No wonder the wretch had liked "*The Thousand and One Nights*." It took little guessing to know what his favorite story was. But now that Digby had become the Old Man of the Sea, where was he going to find his Sinbad?

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE is now MONTHLY—only thirty days to next month's All-Star Issue of All-Star New Stories by All-Star Top-Flight authors.

test area

by... Theodore R. Cogswell

It's easy for an alien scientist to feel superior when he's light years from Earth. But how smart is it to make guinea pigs of men?

"I ASSURE YOU there's nothing to worry about!" said Klen. "It's not as if we were attempting to alter our own past. I'll admit that any such attempt could lead to utter disaster. One little push a few million kersogs ago, and the dwarflies might have emerged as the dominant race instead of us. As it turned out, it was touch and go. No, Shiral, I have the perfect test area—the third planet."

Shiral, Chief Coordinator of the Seekers, let a slow ripple of doubt run the length of his gelatinous bulk.

"If my memory serves me, one of your predecessors used the same terminology several millennia ago when he wanted to check some equations he had developed dealing with sub-nuclear fission. When he went back over his calculations to see if he could find out what had gone wrong, he found he'd dropped a quattuordecimal point. But by then it was too late. One of our planets was missing."

"My figures have all been triple-checked," said Klen impatiently. "And even if the old stories about

If our advancing science should unexpectedly elevate us to the summit of some vast, gene-altering cyclotron trained on the inhabitants of another world just how much of a "hands-off" policy would we adopt? And what if we found ourselves in just such a predicament, guinea pigs for laboratory technicians from beyond the stars? With superbly humorous aplomb top-echelon science-fiction author Ted Cogswell has posed the problem for us.

the formation of the Asteroid Belt are true, the disruption of the fifth planet was no particular loss. The only life on it was a primitive sort of lichen."

The Chief Coordinator rippled again, this time more with petulance than skepticism. "I still don't see why you can't leave well-enough alone. If your calculations are as conclusive as you claim, why not just accept them as such, and find some other problem to keep you busy."

"But maybe I'm wrong," protested Klen.

"In that case," said the other pontifically, "time travel is still an impossibility and you'd just be wasting your time. Has it not been written, 'That which *is* needs no proof, and that which *is not* cannot be proven.' And anyway, I don't want any more planets blown up. It upsets the astronomers."

"But . . ." wailed Klen.

"No *but's*!"

"But I couldn't blow anything up with my machine if I wanted to. All that it does is—"

"You're wasting my time!" snapped the Chief Coordinator. "Permission refused."

Klen humped submissively, took one farewell look at the gleaming machine at the other end of his laboratory, and then taking his nether extremity in his mouth, began to ingest himself.

It took a moment for the Chief Coordinator to realize what was happening. When he did he gave a

double flap of horrified indignation.

"Stop that at once, you crazy idiot!" he shouted. "Have you forgotten the penalty for cannibalism?"

"No," mumbled Klen indistinctly. "The offender is compelled to commit suicide."

"Well?"

"But I *am* committing suicide," said Klen plaintively. He gulped convulsively and another foot of his other end disappeared. "My whole life is in that machine. If I am not to be allowed to find out whether it will work or not, there's no point in going on."

He waited for Shiral's flappings to subside.

"I won't be intimidated," growled Shiral. Klen opened his jaws to take another bite of himself. "However," the coordinator added hastily, "there's no reason why we can't have a more detailed discussion. And for your information, it isn't civilly or militarily respectful to talk with your mouth full."

A sudden look of hope came into Klen's eye and with a sudden convulsion of stomach muscles, he regurgitated the swallowed extremities.

"How was it?" asked the Chief Coordinator with a rather coarse effort at jocularly, quite possibly interlarded with curiosity.

Klen looked down pensively at the almost digested end of his nether extremity. "A little on the gamey side," he admitted. "I don't know if my stomach could have tolerated all of me."

II

The Chief Coordinator had a one-track mind. He waited until the thunder of the great dynamo had crescendoed its way up into inaudibility and then said in an anxious voice, "You're very sure you're not going to blow anything up?"

"Very sure," said Klen patiently. "As I explained before, I am concerned with checking the possibility of time travel—not with sub-nuclear fission. The energies to be released in this experiment are negligible."

"I guess I'll have to take your word for that," said Shiral dubiously. "But assuming that the machine does work and you are able to open up a portal a quarter of a million kersogs in the past and give the third planet a couple of good jolts of gamma rays—how are you ever going to be able to prove that you were actually successful?"

"Elementary, my dear Shiral," said Klen smugly. "Watch." He reached over to the controls of his electronic telescope, and after checking a table of calculations, made a series of fine adjustments. A moment later the great vision screen which occupied all of one wall of his laboratory flickered on. Mirrored in it was a rolling grassy plain dotted with small knots of long-tusked, hairy animals who were contentedly cropping away at the rich vegetation.

"First we have the third planet in an age geologically remote," he

continued. "Now we select a representative sample of the dominant species and observe him carefully."

"Just a minute," protested the Chief Coordinator. "I'm no expert on extra-Martian biology, but I was under the impression that the dominant species use two tentacles for locomotion rather than four."

"I didn't say the grass eaters were dominant. What we're after should be along in a minute." He cranked up the magnification of the screen until their apparent vantage point was only twenty-five feet to the left of a clearly defined path that wound down the bottom of a small ravine. "A family group of them come down every day about this time to drink at the water hole. As soon as they pass we'll get set and catch them on their way back."

"There's something about that quarter-of-a-million figure that bothers me," said Shiral. "I wish I could remember what it is."

His thinking about it was interrupted a few minutes later when a hairy, beetle-browed figure came shambling down the path followed by his mate and two young.

"Interesting—in a disgusting sort of way," said the Chief Coordinator. "But what do they have to do with testing your hypothesis?"

"If it's right, we should have some sort of immediate evidence. Just watch them closely. I'm hoping that the change will be great enough so that we can spot it."

"What kind of change?"

"It's hard to say. Maybe a little

more hair or a little less. If we're really lucky, perhaps an extra digit on each extremity."

Shiral let out a loud slurp of annoyed bewilderment. "Why?"

"Through induced mutation, of course."

"What?"

"Through mutation," Klen repeated. "One way of producing genetic variation is to submit the germ plasm to hard radiation. I've set my machine to open a portal a quarter-of-a-million kersogs, in the past. Once the warp is established, several hundred different areas on the third planet will receive short intensive bursts of gamma rays. Some of this little group's progenitors are bound to be affected. What I'm hoping is that the change will be great enough to be externally evident."

"I'm confused," grumbled the Chief Coordinator.

"You shouldn't be." Klen paused and thought for a minute. "Look, suppose a general mutation had been introduced into our own species a long time ago. Let's say that it resulted in the young being spawned with six tentacles instead of seven. You and I would have six now, wouldn't we?"

"That is a disgusting suggestion," said Shiral severely.

"Admitted. But it's true, isn't it? We'd be different from our present selves."

The other cogitated for a moment and then gave a reluctant ripple of agreement.

"And if I turned my machine back into our own past and introduced such a mutation, we'd never know about it because, as far as we were concerned, we would have always had six tentacles."

The Chief Coordinator waved his seventh tentacle wildly in the air. "But how could we have always had six when we've always had seven. And if we've always had seven . . . This is all over my heads. Switch on the machine and lets get it over with!"

Klen gave an excited nod. It seemed to be hours before the little group of Neanderthal men came back up the path from the water hole. As soon as they were centered on the screen, he reached forward and threw the master control switch of his time machine. "From now on it's automatic."

There was a muted humming and then suddenly a loud scream from Shiral.

"Turn it off! Quickly!"

"I can't!" shouted Klen in alarm. "Why?"

"I just remembered what there was about that quarter-of-a-million kersog figure that bothered me. It was just about that time that the physicist Clexal was testing his hypothesis as to the practicability of space flight. He and a small expedition spent some time on the third planet. If they should be in one of the affected areas you'd be introducing a genetic change into our own race."

Klen turned a pale mauve as the

full import of what the other had said hit him.

"If they were the damage is already done!" He began a frenzied inventory of himself and his companion. "One mouth, one eye, two heads, six tentacles . . ." When he finished he gave a long ripple of relief. "I never want to go through a moment like that again. Either we missed the expedition altogether or the change isn't great enough to be noticeable. Anyway—"

"Look!" There was a sudden gasp from the Chief Coordinator and he pointed dramatically at the vision screen. "The machine worked! Your hypothesis is correct! Time travel is possible!"

The rolling prairie was still there but the hairy beasts—both four-legged and two-legged—were gone. Instead, a high fence bisected the screen and in the distance a needle shaped object with fins at the bottom pointed its nose toward the sky. Far to the left was a clump of low buildings. With shaking tentacles Klen fumbled with the vision screen controls until they were looking directly through the barred window of one of them.

III

"Well," said the general in Command of Guided Missile Project H 70, "let's get on with it."

The man in the white smock reached tentatively toward a small red button and then withdrew his hand.

"I'm almost certain our calculations are right," he said nervously. "But if we've slipped up somewhere the results could be catastrophic. We've been pushed so fast we haven't had time to check properly."

"You've been right so far," growled the general. "That's good enough for me. You civilians never seem able to understand the necessity for the calculated risk."

The man in the white coat started to protest, but the general cut him off short.

"Get going. That's an order. Those swine on the other side have come up with a big missile that's three times more powerful than our X bomb. They could wipe out our entire continent with ten of them. That's why we've got to go ahead with this baby of yours. If your figures can be trusted—and I know damn well they can—we'll be secure again. With three of the Brewster Specials we can pulverize their whole hemisphere."

The general drew himself up.

"Yes, General," sighed the other wearily. "Just as you wish. It's your world." He pressed the red button and in the distance the silver needle began to rise slowly into the air. "What'll I use for a test area?"

The general took a long self-assured draw on his cigar. "Don't worry about targets, son. I've had a nice little island tucked away for some time now. It's in the middle of the Pacific, a thousand miles from nowhere. I've been saving it for just such an occasion as this."

IV

"What's happening?" asked the Chief Coordinator anxiously.

"I don't know." Klen worked busily over the vision-screen controls to keep the rapidly accelerating rocket in focus. "I didn't expect an induced mutation to lead to anything like this. Maybe they're experimenting with *space flight*."

"If they are," said the other ominously, "you'd better go back and reverse whatever it was you did. Those Earthlings are a hundred times our size. If they came here they could gobble us up."

Klen didn't answer. He just sat watching the screen tensely. Slow minutes went by and then suddenly he let out a shrill buzz of relief. "They're a long way from space flight yet. That rocket expended all its fuel when it was only five hundred miles up. Look, it's falling back to Earth."

As the shining shape plunged down toward a tiny speck of rock that stood all by itself in the middle of the blue ocean, it gained such terrific speed that Klen had difficulty keeping up with it. He finally gave up trying, and swooped down for a close focus on the rocky little island that was the missile's obvious target. He didn't have long to wait.

"I thought you said you weren't going to blow anything up," said the Chief Coordinator. "By the time you characters finish checking all of your hypotheses, the Solar System is going to be nothing but one big

Asteroid Belt. First the fifth planet, now the third! When's all this going to stop?"

Klen gave a sick ripple. "For me, right now." Opening his mouth, he prepared to grab his nether extremity.

"Oh, no, you don't," howled the Chief Coordinator. "If you think you're going to ingest yourself and leave me holding the bag, you've got another think coming. You may die soon, but it's not going to be from overeating. You got me into this. Now get me out!"

"How?" asked Klen with a dispairing look at his farther end.

"That's your affair. All that I know is that the Egg Royal is an amateur astronomer. And that as an amateur astronomer he has been deriving a great deal of pleasure from observing the perturbations in the orbit of the third planet. And now that there isn't any third planet left to perturbate . . ." His voice trailed off.

Klen turned pale. The Egg Royal was unpleasant enough when everything was running smoothly. But when he found out that somebody had broken his favorite toy, there would be a loud and prolonged screaming from every official, major or minor, who had the remotest connection with it.

"Look, Klen," the Coordinator said with a calmness he was far from feeling. "Four heads are better than two. Let's both settle down to some serious thinking."

The obvious answer came sooner

than either of them could have anticipated.

"Of course!" exclaimed Klen, intertwining all six of his tentacles in his excitement. "Why didn't we think of it before!"

"Think of what before?"

"Moving up fifty thousand kersogs, going back into the past again and giving the third planet another shot of hard radiation. That should introduce enough variants in the past of the Earthlings to cancel out what just happened."

"Go ahead and try it," said Shiral unhappily. "Things couldn't be worse than they are right now."

Two minutes later with a flick the Asteroid Belt disappeared and a green planet shone in its familiar place. The Egg Royal, who had been in his observatory the whole time, sent for the court optometrist to have his eye examined. "The third planet just jumped light years nearer," he rippled in quivering disbelief.

V

"Yes, General," sighed the man in the white coat wearily. It's your Solar System." He pressed the red button and in the distance a gigantic silver globe arose from a desert waste and disappeared. "What'll we use for a target?"

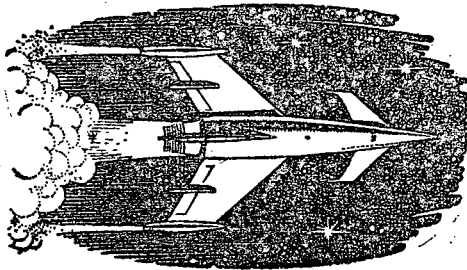
The general took a long complacent draw on his cigar. "Don't worry about targets, son. I've had a nice little world tucked away for some time now." He pointed happily at a little red light point that glowed just above the horizon. "I've been saving it for an occasion just like this."

The man in white turned pale.

"But supposing there's a humanoid race on that planet, sir. We'd be little better than murderers."

His gaze shifted skyward.

"It's a chance we've got to take," the general said calmly. "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, you know."



the fortunate person

by... Robert Sheckley

No man had ever benefited quite so much from the achievements of modern science. With one more task to do he could rest forever.

I'M REALLY AMAZINGLY well off down here. But you've got to remember that I'm a fortunate person. It was sheer good luck that sent me to Patagonia. Not pull, understand—no, nor ability. I'm a pretty good meteorologist, but they could have sent a better one. I've just been extremely lucky to be in the right places at the right times.

It takes on an aspect of the fabulous when you consider that the army equipped my weather station with just about every gadget known to man. Not entirely for me, of course. The army had planned on setting up a base here. They got all the equipment in, and then had to abandon the project.

I kept sending in my weather reports, though, as long as they wanted them.

But the gadgets! Science has always amazed me. I'm something of a scientist myself, I suppose, but not a creative scientist, and that makes all the difference. You tell a creative scientist to do something impossible, and he goes right ahead and does it every time. It's awe-inspiring.

The way I see it, some general

Efforts to simplify technical science for Everyman are not new. Suppose one such effort should succeed, on a grand and impressive scale. And then something truly terrifying happened that turned author Robert Sheckley's hair white and caused him to write this story. As far as we know Mr. Sheckley is still writing for the science-fantasy magazines, the slicks, and the silver screen. But just suppose this was his own personal story—or yours?

must have said to the scientists, "Boys, we've got a great shortage of specialists, and no chance of replacing them. Their duties must be performed by men who may often be completely unskilled. Sounds impossible, but what can you do about it?" And the scientists started to work in earnest, on all these incredible books and gadgets.

For example, last week I had a toothache. At first I thought it was just the cold, for it's still pretty cold down here, even with the volcanoes acting up. But sure enough, it was a toothache. So I took out the dental apparatus, set it up, and read what I was supposed to read. I examined myself and classified the tooth, the ache, the cavity. Then I injected myself, cleaned the tooth out, and filled it. And dentists spend years in school learning to do what I accomplished under pressure in five hours.

Take food now. I'd been getting disgustingly fat, because I had nothing to do but send in the weather reports. But when I stopped doing that I started turning out meals that the finest chefs in the world might well have envied. Cooking used to be an art, but once the scientists tackled it, they made an exact science out of it.

I could go on for pages. A lot of the stuff they gave me I have no further use for, because I'm all alone now. But anyone could be a competent, practicing lawyer with the guides they give you. They're so arranged that anyone with aver-

age intelligence can find the sections you have to master to successfully defend a case, and learn what they mean in plain English.

No one has ever tried to sue me, because I've always been lucky. But I wish someone would. I'd just like to try out those law books.

Building is another matter. When I first arrived here, I had to live in a quonset hut. But I unpacked some of the marvellous building machines, and found materials that anyone could work. I built myself a bombproof house of five rooms, with an inlaid tile bathroom. It isn't real inlaid tile, of course, but it looks real enough, and is amazingly simple to put down. The wall-to-wall carpeting goes down easily too, once you've read up on it.

The thing that surprised me the most was the plumbing for my house. Plumbing always seemed the most complicated thing in the world to me—more complicated even than medicine or dentistry. But I had no trouble at all with it. Perhaps it wouldn't seem too perfect by professional standards, but it satisfies me. And the series of filters, sterilizers, purifiers, fortifiers, and so on, gives me water free of even the toughest germs. And I installed them all myself.

At times I get lonely down here, and there's not much the scientists can do about that. There's no substitute for companionship. But perhaps if the creative scientists had tried real hard they could have worked up something for isolated

guys like me just a little better than complete loneliness.

There aren't even any Patagonians around for me to talk to. They went North after the tidal waves—the few who were left. And music isn't much good. But then, I'm a person who doesn't too much mind being alone. Perhaps that's why they sent me down here.

I wish there were some trees, though.

Painting! I forgot to mention painting! Everyone knows how complicated that subject is. You have to know about perspective and line, color and mass, and I don't know what else. You have to practically be a genius before you can get anything out of it.

Now, I just select my brushes, set up my canvas, and I can paint anything that appeals to me. Everything you have to do is in the book. The oils I have of sunsets here are spectacular. They're good enough for a gallery. You never saw such sunsets! Flaming colors, impossible shapes! It's all the dust in the air.

My ears are better, too. Didn't I say I was lucky? The eardrums were completely shattered by the first concussion. But the hearing aid I wear is so small you can hardly see it, and I can hear better than ever.

This brings me to the subject of medicine, and nowhere has science done a better job. The book tells me what to do about everything. I performed an appendectomy on myself that would have been consid-

ered impossible a few years ago. I just had to look up the symptoms, follow the directions, and it was done. I've doctored myself for all sorts of ailments, but of course there's nothing I can do about the radiation poisoning. That's not the fault of the books, however. It's just that there's nothing anyone can do about radiation poisoning. If I had the finest specialists in the world here, they couldn't do anything about it.

If there were any specialists left. There aren't, of course.

It isn't so bad. I know what to do so that it doesn't hurt. And my luck didn't run out or anything. It's just that everyone's luck ran out.

Well, looking over this, it doesn't seem much of a credo, which is what it was meant to be. I guess I'd better study one of those writing books. I'll know how to say it all then, as well as it can be said. Exactly how I feel about science, I mean, and how grateful I am. I'm thirty-nine. I've lived longer than just about everyone, even if I die tomorrow. But that's because I was lucky, and in the right places at the right times.

I guess I won't bother with the writing book, since there's no one around to read a word of manuscript. What good is a writer without an audience?

Photography is more interesting.

Besides, I have to unpack some grave-digging tools, and build a mausoleum, and carve a tombstone for myself.

crystal
of
macaosu

by . . . Dorothy Madlé

He could see beyond the tremulous
veils of the here and now the
brightly beckoning ramparts of a
world which all men could share.

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN writing about Gregory Dean for twenty years. First it was abuse. Then they made a scientific hero of him, glowingly complete with legends. Of late I've been questioned again, prodded to tell more than I did originally. Well, here it is, as much of the story as I intend to reveal now, or in the future.

I am John Norwood. You will have heard of me. They called me Dean's assistant, but I was only one of three. Mona, his sister, was his helper from the start, and Macaosu the lama was with him, in a way of speaking, long before I was.

And Macaosu is with him now.

I am a year older than Gregory Dean. Mona is two years younger. I met them twelve years after the end of the second World War. I had turned seventeen in the last year of the war, but when I tried to enlist an army psychiatrist discovered that I was privately convinced I could read the minds of other people. I had kept that a secret during all the years of my childhood. You know how a boy wants to be like other people, how

Dorothy Madlé is a general staff reporter on the Milwaukee Sentinel. She was for a number of years firmly convinced that science-fiction writers were a race apart—of extraordinarily gifted mutants! Her long friendship with such brilliant practitioners in the genre as Robert Bloch, Fredric Brown, and W. C. Gault so encouraged her in this idea that she was reluctant to send us this exciting first story, which we instantly bought.

he hates to have anyone think him peculiar.

Just before I tried to get into the army I read about Dr. J. B. Rhine's experiments at Duke University. The article said he had put telepathy on a respectable laboratory basis. I very foolishly told the army psychiatrist about my freak ability because I thought it would make me useful in Intelligence. He didn't believe me, but he could see that I believed it myself. So I was tagged 4-F, psychoneurotic.

I finished high school that year, and started working as a mechanic's helper in a garage. Then the man the job had originally belonged to came back from the army, and I spent the next year drifting around from one job to another.

One night in a bar I tuned in on the thoughts of a man sitting a few stools away. He was reading a newspaper and had just glanced at a cartoon. The picture was clear in his mind, and just for diversion I telecast it to six other men, so that they must have thought it an actual image projected against the wall in front of them. I'd discovered years before, quite by accident, that I could make people see whatever I visualized clearly in my own mind. Of course everyone thinks he knows now how it is done, but nobody did at that time, including me.

That night I'd had several drinks, and was feeling distinctly prankish. The men were so startled they began to compare notes. They

were even more astonished when I let them know I was the trickster and told a few of them exactly what they were thinking. It made a stir, I can tell you. A ratty little character named Roth came over, and started asking questions. I didn't like him, but I agreed to be his partner for awhile.

He signed me up for carnivals all over the country, with himself as manager, and me as his star attraction. I did a mind reading act three times in the afternoon and twice in the evening. We kept at it for two months and Roth was always at me to sign a long-term contract. But before he could talk me into it the Deans found me at Glenbury Fair.

I was sitting in back of the tent, resting, and trying not to hear Roth out in front urging the crowd to come in and see Marlin, the Famous Yogi. I was feeling very sorry for myself. If I had to read minds, why couldn't I do it in poker games, or the stock market?

Later Gregory Dean explained why I couldn't. He said that the human species had taken a turn in its evolution, possibly only temporarily, away from continuous practical use of the telepathic sense that still operates among most other forms of life. A few people have the residual faculty, but those that do also have an instinctive, subconscious ethic that will not permit them to use it for gain against others. They can earn their living displaying that mental quirk, but

when they try to make a direct haul their emotions tighten up, and they draw a complete blank.

As I say, I didn't know about the Rhine experiments then, but that was the way it was with me. I wouldn't have been above taking advantage of a "gift" that I had never wanted anyway, but I just couldn't.

It's strange how you will notice two people out of a crowd and start speculating about them. It was a warm, clear August evening. The midway was jammed and the dusty paths between the sideshow tents were cluttered with strolling people.

This couple were hurrying along, a good-looking, broad-shouldered young fellow in a tan sport coat and slacks, and a very pretty girl in a yellow dress. The girl didn't actually resemble her escort but somehow the pair had a brother and sister look. I noticed particularly that the girl's hair was honey blonde, and that she wore it hanging loose and silky. In the mood I was in the girl seemed to represent everything desirable in life.

I thought how I'd like to have her for my girl or even how wonderful it would be just to walk with them along the path saying the light clever things they probably knew so well how to toss off. I thought how they most probably never did a stroke of hard work in their lives, or had to worry much about anything. It just shows what kind of a mind reader I was when I wasn't seriously working at it.

They were crossing on the little path between the tents, and they didn't even notice me. But before they got to the main path the girl stopped short.

"Now look, Greg," I heard her say. "Why can't you tell me what this is all about? I like fairs, but that's not why you brought me here. Why were you so set on being here before nine o'clock?"

The young man grinned. "We are here to see Marlin the Marvelous, the Man Who Makes Thoughts Visible. See that poster?"

"Yes, I see it. But just why did you—"

"I've been to his show three times," he told her. "He makes a whole tentful of people, except a very few, see subjective visual images as if they were actual pictures projected on a screen. It's positively uncanny."

"You think he might be the man we need?"

"I'm sure of it. Last night I proved to my complete satisfaction that he is not just a clever magician. I sneaked a camera into the tent and took some infra-red photographs. Today I developed them. There's nothing—absolutely nothing—on the film."

"Then what are we waiting for?" asked the girl, as they walked on around the corner.

I felt puzzled and uncomfortable. But at that moment Roth sounded the buzzer and I had to go onstage.

I was always drawn into myself

during my act, and afterward I had to strain to remember exactly what had taken place. I had a keen awareness of other people's thoughts, but at the same time I experienced a queer focusing of the senses and a quick understanding of things that ordinarily remained vague in my own thoughts. I could only dimly sense much that went on outside me, but at the same time my hearing became sharpened so that ordinary sounds hurt like knives.

I tested minds in the audience, and found a farmer who was thinking about his corn crop. I held out my hand and pictured a grain of corn. It swelled and split in my palm, a stalk grew upward, and the roots coiled down through my fingers. I made green blades sprout, a waving tassel grow and lengthen, and sheathed ears form, and quickly ripen. I made other people see the bright wonder of it, simply by keeping it clear in my mind. Then I flipped my hand and the plant was gone.

I glanced out over the audience. The young man and the girl were sitting just beneath the platform. He whispered to her and I caught the words, "That trick has been performed by fakirs in India but with far less success." She nodded.

I thought how good it would be to travel as they must have done, to the distant cities I had dreamed about as a child. Then I went on with my act. I picked out another farmer and concentrated on his

thoughts. After two more attempts the tiredness I had learned to expect closed in.

I looked over at the girl and her eyes were not curious any more. They were warmly sympathetic, and with a sudden, startling quickening of understanding I knew I would love her all my life. And I looked at the man at her side and knew I was to become his friend. I knew that anything either of them might ever want of me I would try to do.

Another farmer was thinking about his pedigreed Jersey bull that had won first prize that afternoon. So I pictured it out of his memory—shiny, black with white saddle markings. I made it move, snort and tug gently against a rope that ended in nothing. A hand appeared, and tagged the animal's neck strap with a blue ribbon.

Through my tiredness I could hear the audience voicing their pleasure and I could also hear the complaints of the ones who hadn't seen anything. There were always a few who departed in anger. Some minds I simply could not reach.

It was my last show for the evening. I always made a point of relaxing right after my act, and Roth had the good sense to respect my wishes. Usually he went across the midway for a few beers while I sat on a campstool, letting the wind blow across my face.

The young man and the girl in the yellow dress were waiting in back of the tent.

"I'm sorry to bother you now,

"Mr. Marlin," the young man said, "but it's important, and we didn't know where to find you at any other time. My name is Dean—Gregory Dean. This is my sister Mona."

He put out his hand, but just then Roth rushed around the corner of the tent, and brushed between us. I was always irritable after my act, and I had all I could do to keep from bashing him, although he was only carrying out an agreement.

"Sorry, folks," he said in his officious way. "Marlin never sees no one after his performance. He's pooped."

He took my arm and started to pull me toward the tent opening. Then he stopped and his little red eyes roamed over Mona and came to rest at the base of her throat.

"Come around again sometime, sister," he said.

I jerked my arm free, and suddenly I felt my fingers closing around the barker's neck. I kept shaking him. Somebody tugged at my shoulder but I refused to stop. Suddenly my rage increased, and I threw Roth violently back against the tent. He slid along the canvas to the ground, lay there a moment, and then started yelling at the top of his lungs: The crowd had missed the fight, but several fairground employees came running toward us.

"Better come with us," Dean said.

Mona was on the other side of me, pulling me urgently away. We ran across the lot, and by the time we reached their car I was feeling

better than I had in a long time. The fight hadn't meant a thing. Starting it had been pure folly, and now I was running away without finishing it. But it had done me good.

"Hope you don't mind being kidnapped," Greg said as he unlocked his car. I found myself laughing as I held the door open for Mona and got in after her. Greg quickly swung himself into the driver's seat, and bent over the wheel.

"I think I like it," I said.

Greg started the motor and maneuvered the car in a wide circle away from the fairground men. They hadn't tried very hard to catch us.

We drove without much talk. I told them my name was John Norwood, not Marlin, and Mona smiled and said it would have been straining coincidence for a magician to have a real name so like Merlin. I hadn't thought of that. I began to feel depressed again, wondering if I'd ever had any really imaginative ideas.

Greg stopped the car in front of a pleasant-looking apartment building. We took a self-service elevator to the sixth floor and Mona drew a key from her purse and let us into a casually modern living room. A black cocker spaniel came bounding toward us and a cream-colored cat with a brown mask and paws arose yawning from the divan.

Greg introduced the dog as Mac, and Mona did the honors for Siva the cat.

Greg and I sat down, and Mona left us for a moment. I could hear a refrigerator door being closed and the clatter of ice in glasses. I knew I would have to tell them the truth about myself before I got to liking them any better.

"Look," I said. "I'm not a yogi. I'm just a freak. I wish I was the fellow you want, but all I have is some odd quirk in my brain that enables me to succeed as a showman. It just happened, and I don't have much control over it."

Greg smiled, offered me a cigarette and took one himself. As he fumbled in his pocket for a match his other hand came down in friendly reassurance on my shoulder.

"Sure, we guessed as much," he said. "That's why we wanted to talk to you."

Mona came in with three tall Tom Collinses. Greg got up, and took the tray from her. Then we all sat down on the sofa with our drinks.

"My brother is a physics instructor at State University," Mona said. In his free time he does research on a project of his own, and I help him. We are trying to find out more about the mind, about what thought is. Have you read anything about experiments in extra-sensory perception?"

"Yes, several years ago I read about a Dr. Rhine. Of late years I haven't studied anything."

Greg nodded.

"Dr. Rhine took telepathy out of

the field of superstition, and put it where it belongs—in a modern, well-equipped scientific laboratory. We are trying to carry his work still further. He convinced a good many people that direct thought transmission is possible. Of course you are a living demonstration of it, as other people have frequently been. They were looked upon with religious awe, or dismissed as impostors until the possibility was pretty conclusively proved with controlled laboratory experiments.

"There is still some division of opinion as to the mechanics involved. Some, including myself and my sister, believe that thought is a series of electro-magnetic vibrations of a wave-length not yet determined, but probably of a very high frequency. If that is true, the brain is a mechanical sending and receiving set, the body a transformer of energy for those elusive vibrations and the carrier waves on which they travel."

"You mean the brain is like a radio-outfit?" I asked.

He nodded. "I believe that subconsciously we send and receive ideas almost constantly. But only rarely can we generate sufficient energy to force them past the threshold of awareness. When it does happen, usually it's only a trivial 'message' that comes through. Mona can explain that better than I can. She's the psychologist of the family. She's an M.D., qualified to practice psychiatry. But she put off starting practice, to col-

laborate with me on the project we've been working on."

"Probably you've heard of repressions," Mona said. "A part of the mind—Freud called it the 'censor'—blocks off many memories, particularly painful or guilty ones, from the consciousness. But those memories still exist and cause trouble. Sometimes they emerge in disguised forms. If Greg's theory is right, ideas received telepathically are apt to be repressed immediately, unless they are so unimportant as not to alert the 'censor.' And sometimes even those harmless, trivial ideas emerge in disguise."

"But there are exceptional people," Greg went on, "people like yourself and some mystics whose bodies produce a stronger current of energy—a current strong enough to penetrate repression."

"You mean we have a kind of supercharged motor for that kind of thing?"

"That's right. A yogi, for example, uses exercises and disciplines to develop himself as a better generator. To you it comes naturally."

"Why do I get so jumpy since I've been in this sideshow business?" I asked. "Sometimes I feel dull and tired and then I'll suddenly go berserk over some little thing like tonight when I half killed Roth."

"To use your own metaphor, you've been racing your motor. No one has been able to keep up such a schedule as yours without

cracking up, or faking the act. The nearest I know is a Hungarian psychologist named Polgar who demonstrated telepathy all over the country for years without burning out. But even his schedule was less exacting than yours."

Mona looked up from the cat curled on her lap. "Tell him about our research, Greg."

"We've been trying to find a means of generating a supplementary current artificially," Greg said. "It would make telepathy demonstrable at will. If we succeed, the nature and quanta of mind can be discovered and proved."

I let the word "quanta" go by, and reached for the idea that interested me most. I asked the typical layman's question.

"Would knowing all that be of any real use to anyone?"

Greg explained without impatience.

"From the scientist's point of view knowledge is valuable in itself, and he doesn't worry too much about what the so-called practical people may do with it. The first fellow to build and control fire probably had a definite application in mind, such as keeping warm. But he certainly didn't dream that his discovery would lead eventually to the incendiary bomb. The physicists who discovered nuclear fission weren't looking specifically for a bomb, either. A scientist just gets an idea and tries to follow through and pin it down."

Mona leaned forward, her gray

eyes bright. Siva stirred and stretched his brown paws up to her shoulder.

"I'm a layman, really, in this particular line of research, so I can talk about practical possibilities. Greg thinks about them too, but he doesn't dare fog up his objective reasoning. But—doesn't it seem logical that a humanity that used telepathy would no longer fool itself?"

"You mean if people had no secret thoughts there couldn't be any liars?"

Greg broke in quickly.

"Not exactly. It would have to be worked out so that an individual could have mental privacy. But if a man kept his mind closed while trying to talk you into something, you'd naturally infer he wasn't honest in his claims. It should check most vicious propaganda."

"And much of the honest misunderstanding that causes hatreds and wars would be swept away too," Mona added.

We were still for a minute while I thought it over. For the first time I tuned into Greg's mind, and then Mona's. In both I found complete honesty—an integrity of thought and purpose new to my experience. I stopped eavesdropping and asked, "Where do I fit in?"

"We've been looking for a person with a natural genius for extra-sensory perception, to use as a control in our experiments. We don't have a financial backer, and most of the money we inherited has been

spent in research. We live on my university instructor's salary, so we can't offer much. But we'd like to have you with us if you're interested enough. We've an extra room, and you're welcome to it if you'd like to live here while we work."

It didn't take me long to come to a decision. I was a little vague about the project, but my memory switched back to the moment in the tent when I'd felt so irresistibly drawn to both Greg and Mona.

I said, "It's a deal," and stood up to shake hands before Greg could change his mind. I had a queer feeling of having come home for the first time in my life. I wondered how they could trust me that much, on such short acquaintance.

Greg and I shook hands and Mona stood up too, smiling happily. Then she gave a kind of gasp and we spun around to stare.

A man dressed in a long, coarsely-woven brown robe stood calmly in the center of a rug. His right arm was curled around a large copper vase, and a thin scrawny hand emerged from his loose sleeve to clasp with a trembling intensity a metal rod running down into the vessel.

"At last," he said in slow, careful English, "I can tell you. The crystal—"

The doorbell rang. The brown-robed man frowned, and then, startlingly, he was gone.

Mona turned to me, almost irritably.

"Must you produce your thought

projections without warning? That one was interesting—and a little terrifying. Where did you get your model for him? And what did he mean by 'the crystal?'"

"I didn't do it," I protested. "At least, not knowingly. I never saw him before—"

Greg had started across the room to answer the doorbell. "It was more than interesting," he said, turning. "I think we're going to get somewhere."

Roth was at the door, and there was a bitter reproach in his eyes. He'd traced me by the auto-plate number of Greg's car. By now I wasn't very proud of myself for roughing him up, and Greg thought it would be only fair for me to finish out the week at Glenbury Fair. So I did.

In the months that followed I learned what hard work could really mean. People who keep busy for personal gain may work at a furious pace at times, but seldom with such a dedicated intensity of purpose.

Greg and Mona treated me like a worthy young partner standing on the threshold of an incredible new world of totally unexplored knowledge. I was like a vacuum with a sudden puncture in its casing, and they were kept busy preparing me for a task which only a well-informed mind could hope to perform.

Mona and I studied during Greg's teaching hours at the university. We read everything we

could get on oriental, Haitian and African occultism. Mona taught me how to sift through jumbles of magic and symbolism to find grains of probable fact.

The three of us made hundreds of tests. We established one thing to Greg's complete satisfaction—the fact that my thought transmission energy could be used by both Greg and Mona. Without me, they could not successfully transmit ideas to each other. But when I held my thoughts to a point of blankness with only a relaxed willingness to cooperate, they were able to do so.

It was no parlor game. We sat in different rooms, and first Greg and then Mona would write down numbers or words, and the other would try to duplicate them. Each trial was carefully recorded before notes were compared.

We made experiments with Mac the dog, to determine whether the human mind could communicate directly with the non-human. I was sent into another room while Mona made written notes of the exact spot at which she would visualize a bone lying on the floor. Greg stayed with Mona but he did not read the notes. In eight tries out of ten, Mac jumped eagerly for the imaginary bone. We were excited after that, but tired. Mona gave Mac a real bone, and we took time out, and went to a late movie.

The following night it was Siva's turn. I went into the kitchen, and five minutes later I heard an amused

groan from Mona, and riotous laughter from Greg. I gave up my concentrated blankness and joined them.

"Experiment one was not an orderly success," Mona giggled. She handed me her before-the-experiment note. It read:

"Exp. 1, Cat Siva: Control will visualize butterfly rising from point at southwest base of floor lamp beside divan, and fluttering twelve inches above the floor to northeast corner of desk. If perceived, butterfly presumably will be chased by cat."

"You'll never believe it," Mona related, "but that demon animal sat tight and simply followed my butterfly with its eyes, evincing no enthusiasm. Then it closed its eyes, and what did I see? A mouse! A big fat mouse running across the floor from my butterfly. Siva projected it. Now see how self-satisfied the creature looks."

"It was simply a case of a stronger mind taking over and dominating a weaker one," Greg said.

"I know," Mona admitted demurely. "I noticed that *you* saw the mouse too."

We started a series of experiments outdoors with animals and birds. Then we tried insects. These trials couldn't be conclusive, Greg pointed out, because if you direct a bumble bee to seek out a non-existent flower, and it does, there is always a chance it would have flown in that direction anyway. But

they did appear to indicate, Greg admitted cautiously, that mind is universally communicable.

We struck something of a snag when we tried to direct mentally the actions of social insects, honey-bees or ants. From the works of Fabre and the other entomologists we had inferred that these insects functioned almost entirely by telepathy, or something closely related to it. The individual ant seems to be merely a segment of the community ant-mind, with all of its behavior patterns centrally directed.

When we tried to cut in, and direct an ant to an imaginary piece of sugar, at first nothing happened. If we kept on, the ant started rushing frantically about in crazy circles. But the strangest, most startling development was the effect on ourselves. If we kept up the experiment, each of us would feel a sense of terror and confusion so strong it would agonizingly disrupt all of our efforts at concentration.

The same thing happened when we experimented with bees.

We didn't work quite all the time. On some nights the three of us took time off to enjoy a play or an opera, or simply to spend a few hours with Greg's friends. Twice Mona and I went dancing while Greg stayed in his small laboratory working on the device which he hoped would produce carrier wave energy to augment the current that carries human thought.

His idea revolved about a variation of the crystal-detector used in

radio for the rectifying of high-frequency electric current. For this he tested crystals of every conceivable shape and pattern.

One evening in June, when I'd been with the Deans nearly a year, Greg beckoned to me from the door of the laboratory. It was the first time I had ever seen him look discouraged, and I knew instantly that he had experienced bitter disappointment.

"I'm afraid we'll have to start over, and develop another, completely new system," he said.

Before I could reply the man in the brown robe appeared suddenly before us, precisely as he had done on the day when Greg had gone to the door to admit Roth, and we had all been too excited to pay much heed to what had seemed an involuntary thought projection for which I alone had been responsible.

"I hope your concentration will not be interrupted tonight as it was before," the brown-robed figure said. "I am Macaosu, a humble dweller in a lamasery in a country far from yours. My admiration for your work has led me to take the liberty of contacting your conscious minds in this fashion.

This time Mona did not look startled.

"You're real then? You're not—"

The vision smiled. He had the same serene, lined face and was still clasping the copper vase.

"Insofar as your senses are concerned I am an hallucination," he

went on. "But in my own experience I am what you would term a solid fact. I am a living man, a lama who has never left his native mountains, but who has known you for several years through a mental process similar to that upon which you are now working."

His eyes, luminous and penetrating, observed my face.

"I have spent much time in contact with your unconscious mind, Mr. Norwood. You taught me, among many interesting things, to speak your language. For that I am grateful."

He turned to Greg.

"Dr. Dean, my errand tonight is to remind you of a crystal which is in your possession, but forgotten. I believe it remains in the pocket of a discarded coat. It was found by an explorer whom you knew. He picked it up near the pillar of rock on which our lamasery is built. It is a volcanic mineral found only in this region."

He paused an instant, then went on. "It is the formation for which you have been searching. In fact, by subconscious suggestion, I induced your friend to bring the fragment to you. I waited for you to use it in your experiments, but somehow it escaped your attention. Therefore, using Mr. Norwood's unusual mental current to supplement the emanations from my vase, I have made this second effort to speak with you."

"We are deeply grateful, Father Macaosu," Greg said, "May I ask

"what is the contents of your vase?"

"Crystals such as the one you have, in a solution of salt water. A weak electric current is generated, acting between the polarized surfaces of the crystals and the electrode formed by the metal rod I hold. It has enabled us to explore the world without leaving our dwelling.

"We contact subconscious minds almost at will, thus making use of the eyes and ears of persons in almost every land. The conscious minds of persons not too far away can also be reached. When we need supplies, one of us 'appears' to a peasant in the valley. He obtains what the 'phantom lama' has requested, and brings it to a designated place, where one of us waits with his pay.

"You may smile at the simple accident that caused the discovery of our crystals' power. One of the duties of our brotherhood is to investigate all known mystic practices. The method of auto-hypnosis known as crystal-gazing occurred to us as a possible aid to meditation. We chose a piece of crystal from our valley and ground it by hand into a sphere. At first its use had indifferent results. Then, on the day when it was San Su's turn to prepare food for the twelve brothers, the discovery occurred.

"San Su carried the crystal into our lamasery kitchen, expecting to find time for meditation while our vegetarian meal was being cooked. On the floor beside him he placed

a pottery jar of salt water intended for the soaking of vegetables. Accidentally the crystal ball rolled from the table and fell into the jar. San Su seized a metal ladle and thrust it deep into the water to retrieve the crystal. To his astonishment, his mind snapped into clear communication with a monk in Eastern Tibet. Our thought current is not nearly so strong as you should be able to produce by sending an electric charge through your converter, yet it has served us well."

The lama's face grew troubled.

"The brothers have considered long before entrusting you with this knowledge. With it you could change the thoughts of mankind. Ancient despots and modern dictators had power because they could sway men's minds, yet they were limited to sensory communication. We know none of you three would use the crystal unworthily. We believe also that it would be impossible for anyone to lie deliberately with his mind, as men can lie by speech. But there are fanatics who believe sincerely in their misguided zeals, and in them is danger. We are presuming like the Prometheus of Grecian legend, to hasten evolution. We may do illimitable good, or much harm."

Macaosu vanished.

Greg jumped to his feet. "I remember now. Bob Detwiler left a crystal with me when he came back from the Orient. I'll find it."

He turned, and left the room. He was gone only a few moments

and when he came back there was no need for him to tell us that his search had been successful. It was mirrored in his eyes.

By sunrise the current corrector was ready for its first electric charge.

"There's no way of knowing how many watts we'll need," Greg said as he plugged a cord into the wall connection. "I've arranged the rheostat so that only a very small current will enter the generator. It may not be powerful enough, or it may be a little too strong."

He took hold of a projecting metal rod and told Mona to operate the switch. There was a low hum as the current penetrated the converter.

What happened after that I must put together from fragments of memory, both events as they transpired, and of how things were when it was over.

The generator's amplified mind waves caught up ours, and spread terrifyingly over all the world. There were confused images, conflicting thoughts, as millions of individuals were brought into contact with what must have seemed to them the chaos of eternal night and darkness, or a holocaust of colliding worlds.

Then the thoughts of everything alive cancelled into buzzing blankness and there was no more thought. All consciousness was gone. Nothing acted or willed. It was a world of the breathing dead.

In the street outside our labora-

tory, automobiles veered and collided. In a distant corner of the earth two opposing army divisions fell as they charged, and lay unhurt on their smoking guns. Birds became paralyzed in flight, and flying insects drifted down like falling leaves. Planes crashed. Swimmers sank.

The earth still revolved on its axis, winds blew, clouds drifted. Only conscious life was suspended.

Greg was slumped before the machine, his hand still clamped on the generator rod. Mona and I lay on the floor. Greg's brain, through which the generated energy continued to flow, was as inert as his paralyzed limbs. Slowly, painfully, he began striving toward consciousness, dimly sensing responsibility. If he could have formed words he would have muttered: "I must think."

Even his vague stirrings set up an involuntary broadcast, and all life responded with a faint effort of will. The effort in turn aided Greg. He pulled his hand from the switch. It is probable that everything alive moved a hand, a forepaw, a wing or a fin, in reflexive response to Greg's motion.

The current still flowed. Greg, no longer in direct contact, had become a channel of awareness solely, helpless until some dominant mind remote from the generator could regain control. If there had been a conscious observer, he might have doubted if any one mind could succeed.

There must have been a struggle first, between the two minds most used to telepathic control. The corporate intelligence of bees proved stronger than that of ants, and won dominance over all life.

The first change anyone could remember definitely was a sense of compulsion toward a simple, habitual task. It became stronger, life stirred, and every living creature on Earth not too badly hurt scrambled into motion. Men and women first of all. They thought as bees must think, about the simple tasks of everyday existence.

Men began to clear the streets without too much wonder at the wrecked cars that lined them. Women took care of their young, and hurried with their housework. Laborers worked. The faraway armies resumed their charge.

Greg and I, like many others who had no routine manual work, felt an urge to get out into the open. Mac the dog buried a package of cigarettes under the living room rug. Siva waited like a statue beside the kitchen door. Mona began to clean the laboratory. As she dusted along the edges of the floor, her arm snagged against a cord. It interfered with her work, so she pulled impatiently. There was a slight click, and the current stopped.

I came to in a little park a few blocks from the apartment. All around me were people, bewildered people not knowing why they were there. I did not see Greg. My first

thought was for Mona and I started running, shouldering through the screaming crowd on the littered street.

I met her a block from our building. She was panting, struggling through the crowd, searching among the frightened and the injured. I called her name and she ran to me. I took her into my arms. Then we went home. The apartment was quiet and orderly as if the world had not changed. We went into the laboratory and I dismantled Greg's machine carefully, and slipped the crystal into my pocket.

"Stay and wait for Greg," I told Mona. "I'll go and see what I can do."

It wasn't hard to find Greg. He was at the worst wreck in our neighborhood, helping to remove the dead and injured from a bus that had run into a gasoline truck. The fire hadn't reached the people in the rear, and Greg was tugging at a twisted piece of metal that was bent in a circle over the body of a girl who seemed to be alive. He got it off and together we carried the girl out, and laid her on the sidewalk with the others.

We were still working when the first newspaper extras came out.

Ambulances were screaming past, and we flagged them, but it was some time before an empty one drew in to the curb. When finally the wreck was cleared, and the people taken away, we went on to another.

When we got home Mona was

sitting with her head on the kitchen table, sound asleep. We threw ourselves down in our clothes without waking her, and slept for ten hours—the deep, dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion.

You don't have to be told about the rest, for the papers were full of it for weeks, and when they let it drop the scientific journals took it up.

Greg went to the police station and told them he was responsible. They wouldn't listen for crackpots everywhere were making the same claims. Then he walked into a meeting of science professors at the university, outlined our research, showed them our records, and gave them a telepathy demonstration, using me as energy generator instead of the current. They believed him, of course, and all hell broke loose.

There were government investigations, arrests by the police and the FBI, and questionings by the War Department and Senatorial Committees. Greg was damned by the newspapers and the politicians. He was accused of being a Communist, and the Moscow press defined him as a tool of corrupt democratic aggression.

Mona and I were denounced too. They wanted us to produce the crystal. We had it hidden, and Greg refused to say where it was, where it came from or what kind of crystal it was. They confiscated the machine and A-bomb research had a holiday while the top fission boys, the en-

gineers and the chemists, tried to work out the combination.

Mona and I worried about Greg. He seemed to be shriveling from the inside. He and Mona had lived a fairly sheltered life and their knowledge of human arrogance and greed had been mostly academic like the case histories in Mona's psychiatry texts. She and I were somewhat insulated by our new preoccupation with each other, but we could tell that Greg had taken on himself the guilt for thousands of deaths. In his heart he was a repentant mass murderer as well as a profound scientific failure.

Then one day he was approached by an advertising executive and offered five million dollars for the crystal and a working drawing of the machine. He came home, dug the crystal from the place we'd cached it, got out a hammer and smashed the thing into dust. Then he flushed the debris down the kitchen drain.

Suddenly Macaosu was with us in the kitchen. He did not look at me or Mona. He smiled at Greg and said, "It's all right, my son. You may come."

He gave some place names and directions and landmarks which only Greg wrote down, and I saw life—the young, interested vitality that had first impressed me with Greg—coming back into his face. He did not object when Macaosu said, "Do not fail to bring dry cell batteries."

Mona and I were married just

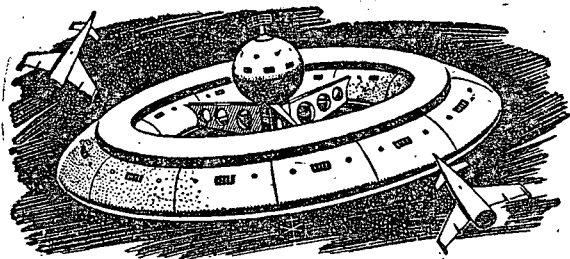
before Greg left. We have two sons and a daughter. The oldest, Greg Norwood, is nearly ready for college. I want all of them to have a better education than their father had, to make knowledge their goal.

Gregory Dean appeared to us once, wearing the brown robe of Macaosu's order. He told us everything was well. I don't know what they are doing, nor whether he ever will return. I don't think the lamasery ever will be found. Every expedition has failed. Nobody knows even what country it is in except Mona and I, and we won't tell. It may be coincidence that no wars

have broken out since Greg left, and that political demagogues who start to fan men's prejudices seem always to change and become influences for tolerance.

Mona and I have made some contributions. After our third child was born she took up her delayed practice of psychiatry. She is a very great doctor of the mind, for she seems able to reach immediately into the repressed depths of a sick psyche and resolve it into health like her own.

She can, that is, if I am in the next room generating current.



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No more terrifying creature ever challenged the age-old supremacy of man. But Dr. Lord had a firm and abiding faith in miracles.

And it came to pass that a child was born among them. And it was not a man-savage, but a creature in aspect terrifyingly godlike. In the image of the Rhama was the wondrous infant made. The man-savages knew not what he was, and they were in great fear of the awfulness of the First Rhama.

"THIS IS NO ordinary mutation, Doctor," the biologist said. "It's not a human infant at all, but an aberration without precedent in evolutionary theory. Its every structural aspect is different. So terrifyingly different that I hardly dare—"

"I won't bandy words with you!" The physician interrupted, turning with a shudder from the specimen case. "Whatever you may choose to call it, it's a monster!"

The subject of their conversation was resting quietly in the glass tank, its gills slowly and rhythmically opening and closing. As it eyed the two men it swept its thin tail languorously through the water. It floated a few inches above the floor of the tank, its webbed limbs extending motionlessly from its stumpy body. Staring fixedly out of

The most brightly gleaming facet of any truly compelling story is perceptiveness—the successful construction of an imaginary world out of the whole cloth of a spontaneity so disarming its authenticity cannot be doubted. So meet Monnie, a monster which Norman Arkawy must assuredly have encountered in byways benighted, to make of him so fearful an enigma.

unblinking eyes, it seemed to be listening intently to every syllable of the conversation between the doctor and the biologist.

"Yes, it's a monster," the biologist agreed. "There's no argument about that." He shivered slightly. "It's frightening to think that this thing was born of human parents!"

"Well, what are you going to do with it?" the doctor asked impatiently.

The biologist walked over to the case and gazed at the ugly blank face of the creature within. "Do?" he said, softly. "What *can* we do? We'll study it, of course—watch its development, try to find out how it happened."

"Don't you think it might be better to kill it?" the doctor suggested. "We could narcotize it first and—"

The scientist shook his head. "Anyone foolish enough to throw away an opportunity to study a previously unknown phenomenon of life would be extremely ill-advised. Anyhow, what you're suggesting would be murder."

"I don't agree with you. How can you murder something that isn't human?"

"Mr. Bryson might refuse to regard it as not human," the biologist said. "After all, it's *his* son."

Actually Mr. Bryson would have thanked the gentlemen if they had destroyed his son. Like all prospective fathers, he had waited anxiously for the birth of his first-born, and when he had been told that the

child was abnormal, he had vowed that he would love it notwithstanding. But when he had seen the hideous, gill-breathing thing swimming in its tank . . .

Mr. Bryson signed the necessary documents and his "son" was legally adopted by the Cross Scientific Research Foundation. At his request, it was agreed that his wife should be told that her child had died at birth. It was kinder that way. The truth would be an even greater shock and one from which she might never recover. The monster was a creature to be studied, not loved.

And in the beginning, the men took the First Rhama to a holy place and they cared for him. And it was good. And in all the world there was no Rhama save the First Rhama. And the men cared for him and he grew strong.

As the months passed, the thing developed and grew. It was seen to have a greater resemblance to the human form than had originally been supposed. Its body was shaped like the body of a human child, the nipples on its chest, its navel and its infantile reproductive organs being all normal in appearance. But its skin was gray, leathery and hairless. And its tail was nine inches in length.

The monster's limbs were humanoid, too. But a gray webbing separated each of its fingers, and a thin extension of the membrane stretched from its forelimbs to the base of its thorax. Its legs, or hind-

limbs, were not webbed to its body, in similar fashion but the toes were long and, like the fingers, were connected by flexibly expansible webbing.

Teeth soon appeared in its mouth, identical with the deciduous teeth of a human infant. The mouth, however, was broader and completely lifeless—a mere circular orifice in the lower part of its face.

Above the wide mouth, two flat nostrils comprised the creature's nose. This feature had no function, apparently, because the monster lived under water and breathed through gill slits which were situated behind, and slightly below its ears.

Its ears were flat discs, and its eyes were exceptionally large, bulging and lidless, creating the blankly staring expression always present on the thing's face. Its head was large, and grotesquely out of proportion to its body, the cranium actually being considerably larger than that of a normal child. And there was no hair on it, which made it seem even more immense than it was.

During the first year of its life, it was content to remain in its underwater home. It learned to swim skilfully and spent hours at a time playfully cavorting in the water.

Shortly after its first birthday, however, it began to show signs of restlessness. It would swim to the top of the tank and project its head out of the water, and then, in a sudden access of energy, dive to the bottom and crawl along the floor,

nudging against the glass walls.

Noticing its odd behavior, the scientists of the Foundation removed it from the tank to examine it more closely. It was discovered that the creature had developed lungs in addition to its gills, and could breathe as well in the air as it did in water. It was equally at home in both elements. The monster was a true amphibian.

And the name of the Rhama went out to all the lands, and across the seas, and in the farthest valley and on the highest mountain, men came to know the Rhama and to wonder about him.

The monster brought the Cross Foundation more fame than all the other important work it had ever done. Everyone, it seemed, was interested in the Foundation's weekly bulletins. And everything the monster did was news.

Dr. Lord, the director of the Foundation, began to receive a continuous stream of mail concerning the care and well-being of Monnie, as the monster was affectionately called by those who cared for him.

Letters came from cranks who urged that the "horrible creature" be destroyed. Well-meaning religious groups advocated that he be set free, and no longer subjected to laboratory studies "so degrading to a creature of God." Several wealthy women even offered to give him a home, and promised that he would receive religious guidance. Other groups indignantly demanded that all experimentation and observa-

tion be stopped immediately. "The only humane course is to painlessly put the unfortunate creature out of its misery."

And it came to pass that a man arose from among the multitude to be a prophet unto the First Rhama. Doctorlord was he called. He saw the greatness of the Rhama and he proclaimed it for all men to hear.

In a form letter which he sent to each of his varied correspondents, Dr. Lord stated that Monnie "is content in his surroundings. He is treated like a child—which, of course, he is." And he went on to elaborate on the infinite pains which were being taken by the Foundation to make sure that their charge was well cared for and happy.

"I should like to state further," the letter continued, "that this child who has been called a monster, a freak—but never a child—has demonstrated exceptional abilities, both mental and physical. To destroy such an individual would certainly be a heinous crime for, if our tests are any indication—and we know them to be reliable—he is not merely intelligent, he is actually far superior to the average human child."

Dr. Lord thought it advisable *not* to state in his letters that comparisons between Monnie and normal children of his age showed the freak to be so far in advance of them that the relationship could not be expressed by the usual terms, "genius" and "prodigy."

At the age of two, the monster was three times the size of a normal child and had the strength of a human boy approaching adolescence. His intelligence was so great that his mental development was equivalent to that of a bright seven-year-old.

His progress in learning was amazing. Within a few years, he had outstripped several of his tutors. At the age of six he was beginning to study college subjects, and shortly before his seventh birthday, his female tutors had to be replaced by men because he was beginning to feel the mating urge with an intensity of yearning which was totally uninhibited. In size and strength he was, at this time, truly gigantic.

But they were evil. They scorned the prophet Doctorlord and sent out false prophets of their own. They sought to destroy the Rhama.

Despite his manifestly superior mind and body, the monster continued to be attacked publicly by individuals and groups who urged his destruction. Even among the scientists at the Foundation there were a few who advocated the coldly scientific elimination of Monnie.

"How can we allow so dangerous an aberration to live?" they asked. "See how powerful he's become already! If his growth continues we won't be able to control him."

"See how powerful an elephant is!" Dr. Lord would reply with angry sarcasm. "The beasts may be

secretly plotting our destruction. Let's kill all elephants!"

"But he's cunning, as well as strong. He's quite capable of devising a plan to destroy us all."

Dr. Lord refused to countenance his colleagues' hysterical fears. "Not only is Monnie cunning," he told them, "he's very wise. His mind is not twisted by fear or hate or greed. He has no reason for wanting to destroy us. And," he added quietly, "he's my friend."

"That abomination! A friend?"

"A very loyal friend. Have you ever talked to him?"

The arguer shuddered. "I can't even bear to look at him!"

"He looks ugly to you only because you base your judgment on standards of beauty which are purely arbitrary. Have you ever thought of how we 'handsome' human beings might look to the inhabitants of some other planet? Do you remember that line of Robert Burns: 'O would some power the giftie gie us, to see ourselves as others see us . . .'"

"There is nothing uglier than a case of arrested development!" Another of the arguers insisted.

"Arrested development?"

"Of course. It's quite apparent that the fetus developed normally for a time and then freakishly stopped. He's just a modified fetus even now."

Dr. Lord laughed. "So are you, Doctor," he said. "The only difference between you and Monnie is that each of you has been modified

in radically different ways. Monnie is a case of altered, not arrested, development."

"I say that 'arrested' is a far more accurate term."

"How can you honestly believe that when you can see that he is stronger and more intelligent than any ten of us?" Dr. Lord surveyed the faces of the men in the room—small men who had been outraged by Monnie's extraordinary development because they *were* small. He smiled ironically.

"No, gentlemen," he continued, "Monnie's development was not arrested. He is our superior. And that, I think, is the crux of the problem. Some of us can't bear the thought that we, as men, are no longer the highest form of life on Earth. We're jealous of our long heritage of supremacy."

A distinguished-looking, white-haired man at the back of the group spoke up in answer. "Supposing that to be true," he said in a low voice, "would we not be justified in guarding our heritage? Are we to allow this creature to achieve supremacy over us?"

And Doctorlord opposed them and enlightened them so that they might see and know the glory of the Rhama.

"Gentlemen," Dr. Lord said with patient forbearance. "Some of us, it seems, are a bit confused. Surely, we don't mean the things we've said. But I can understand why we've said them. Ages ago, when our sea-dwelling ancestors muta-

tionally spawned a land dweller, they must have felt very much as we do now. Later, when the first mammal appeared, its parents possibly debated whether or not to let it live. And so on, with every new step in the evolutionary process that has culminated in man. Now, Monnie has evolved *from* man. He well might be the next step.

"Monnie, as an individual, is not going to threaten our treasured heritage," he continued. "But he is the first of a new race—a race which may some day inherit the Earth. Not tomorrow, surely. Not for thousands of years, perhaps, for Monnie's birth was just a little premature in terms of geologic time."

"Well, even in terms of the future," one of the arguers protested, "how can we sit back and allow creatures like that to attain supremacy over our own descendants?"

Dr. Lord patiently repeated his explanation. "Creatures like Monnie," he concluded, "are going to *be* our descendants. Furthermore, there's nothing we can do about it. Regardless of what we do with Monnie, others like him will eventually come. He is only the first of a superior race."

Thus it was that Doctorlord, the man-prophet of the First Rhama, heralded our coming to the world.

Offer thanks, O Rhama, to the First Rhama who has given us this time for rejoicing. Sing his praise!

Dr. Lord was right, of course. But his predictions were not strictly accurate. When Monnie was eight

years old another monstrosity was born—ten thousand miles away in Siam.

Fear once more possessed the minds and hearts of men. If Monnie's birth had *not* been thousands of years premature, the end of *homo sapiens* might well be near at hand. Perhaps this generation of fear and dark mistrust was to be man's last.

"Kill them now!" the frightened men urged. "If they mate, their supremacy will be assured."

Dr. Lord painfully repeated his explanation, pointing out how foolish and useless it would be to destroy Monnie. The two monsters would never mate, for they were a world apart, and safeguards could be established.

It was then that one of his assistants became wholly irrational. "If these beings are to replace man—if they really are *homo superior*—we have nothing to fear. As you say, our descendants will not suffer, for *they* will be our descendants. But if the two births are not premature steps in evolution, but coincidental, freakish accidents, man in the future will be relegated to the role of an intelligent animal—a highly accomplished ape. That would be intolerable."

Dr. Lord laughed. "Suppose," he countered, "the two births are coincidental accidents. Suppose they do develop independently and co-exist peacefully with man. What makes you think that would be disastrous for humanity?"

He paused and scanned the faces of his colleagues. "What have we to fear?" he questioned. Are we, indeed, nothing more than intelligent animals who must dominate or be dominated? Can't we conceive of a peaceful co-existence with ourselves and with others for the mutual benefit of all intelligent beings?" He laughed sardonically. "If we cannot," he said, "then we need no outside force to relegate us to the role of highly accomplished apes!"

Remember, O Rhama, the glory of the season which has been set aside as the Feast of Man. And it shall be a time for rejoicing. Every suncycle, on the first earthcycle of the mooncycle Threem and for six earthcycles thereafter shall you celebrate the Feast of Man.

Monnie stopped growing when he was twelve. In maturity, he was the size of an African bull elephant, and his endurance was phenomenal. He could run for end-

less miles at a speed almost as fast as that of a train.

One day shortly after his fourteenth birthday, Monnie escaped from his walled-in home at the Cross Foundation and sped over land and sea, over mountain and across desert, directly to Siam. Half-way around the world he had sensed a waiting glory.

The girl-monster was six, and she was just beginning to feel the mating urge.

Remember, O Rhama!

For seven earthcycles shall you feast with man. Thus do we honor Doctorlord and the arrival of the First Rhama, who came up from among the man-savages. The Rhama must never forget that it is from man's living that he sprang and that man is a holy being, blessed also with wisdom and love.

Most exalted is the Rhama!

Most exalted is man!

Each is a servant of the other. Together, we guide the universe.



he
stepped
on
the
devil's
tail

by . . . Winston Marks

If you step on the Devil's tail
the consequences are sure to be
fiery. But you'll be lucky-in love!

IT WAS INEVITABLE that His
Satanic Majesty should find it es-
sential to give personal, undivided
attention to Panphila Megan.

By all statistics of bust, waist and
hip, this little human mink was a
natural for breeding mischief, and
her failure to do so was quite some-
thing more than a disappointment
—it was a threat.

Panphila Megan's naive rejection
of sin was sowing dangerous seeds
of morality at Broughly College,
and once started, this sort of thing
could get quite out of hand.

In spite of considerable coaching
from the underworld, the many
males of Broughly who had sought
her downfall had each come away
defeated, adoring and smiling
through his tears of frustration.

Pan was that kind of a girl.

Her golden, angel-down hair
softly haloed her vivacious face.
There was a straight nose with
little honest freckles. Her un-
kissed mouth was gentle and moist.
From her blue eyes she poured love
and compassion upon freshman and
senior alike.

Her love sprinkled like a light
spring shower, moistening the seeds
of devotion in all it touched, but

*Inimitable are the gifts of Winston Marks in the realm of fantasy trip-
pingly light and fantastic, and even a little somber. So accompany him
now as he wends his way by streams elysium with a little bundle of charm
yclept Panphila, in the footsteps of Thorne Smith now and then perchance,
but with a silvery flashing master's flourish everlastingly his own.*

forming no morbid pools for the pollywogs and scallywags.

In her freshman year Fraternity Row considered her a challenge, but her passive resistance stirred atavistic instincts of chivalry. As time passed her purity became almost legendary. The regard with which she came to be held grew into a sort of emotional standard. All the girls finally developed a reluctance to cooperate in even the little common-every-day varieties of sin.

At the insistence of his board of directors, His Nibs finally called an emergency meeting and studied the report on Panphila Megan.

He listened to testimony from the several imps in charge of addictions, alcoholism, cheating, falsehoods, parsimony and thievery and commented, "It would seem she is impervious to the minor temptations. What have you to report, Beezie?"

His Prime Minister shrugged. "Murder, arson and rape are quite out of the question at this stage."

"Which narrows it down, doesn't it," Satan observed with sarcasm. At one time he might have rubbed his hands at the prospect, but with the resurgence of evangelism on Earth, these cases were placing an annoying drain on his resources.

"Wait until you see her, Chief," said the P. M. "You won't mind trending to this one."

The "chief" glared at the empty seat near the end of the conference table. His administrator in charge of Lust had cleverly pleaded a

headache and avoided the conference.

"If she's so infernally beautiful why haven't the males in the Broughly vector been presented with suitable opportunities? That's what I want to know!" He pounded the table and thundered, "When will you people get it through your short-horned skulls that I'm an *executive*, not a depraved *errand boy*!"

His blast sent a sear of white-hot vapor down the long, asbestos table-top, and it checked and flaked. The little pads of mica notesheets curled up in puffs of smoke like tissue paper.

"It's not bad enough," he ranted, "that They raise the rates of Forgiveness to a new high and dump Salvation around like Manna!" He shook a wire-haired fist at the red-flickering crags overhead. "Now they begin throwing us 'ringers' like this Heavenly Panphila Megan! Well, they haven't sneaked one past us since St. Joan, and by the tungsten time of my tail, it will take a heap of amnesty to save this Pan woman when I finish her!"

It was a mighty oath, and he drew a potent plan. But one unforeseen event caused him to alter it.

Not even the Prince of Darkness could predict the inopportune moment that one Martin Costigan would choose to step on His Majesty's tail. Having just returned from a productive but miserable winter visit to North Korea, Satan

was suffering a touch of arthritis in his caudal extremity.

Even so, the imps commented later behind their hands, He had no right leaving it lie around uncoiled like that. That He did was ample testimony that Panphila Megan was even more bewilderingly, radiantly lovely than anyone could describe to His Bemused Majesty.

* * *

Senior Martin Costigan's love for Pan Megan dominated all his other interests and ambitions, and these were several. Mart was a three-letter-man including captain of varsity football; and president of the student-body, candidate for a Phi Beta Kappa Key and an active officer in his Fraternity.

That he reached his majority a virgin was not to be laid to his physical qualifications. To the contrary, Costigan was handsome in the best dark-haired, muscular, long-lashed tradition of co-educational institutions everywhere.

Mart's carnal innocence was sheerly a function of his fidelity and devotion to one Panphila Megan. This platonic relationship was established in their freshman year at the first dance of fall term. When he made his bid for the favors he had been led to believe were synonymous with co-educational society, she laid down the law, gently but firmly.

"Sure, I like you, Mart. I like all the boys—too much. If you and

I are to be friends, you must never touch me except on the dance floor."

He thought she was just being a coy chick, this girl whose radiant smile could fetch any male on the campus at a hundred yards on a foggy day. He accused her of playing the field.

That brought tears, and he felt like a heel. She said, "I—I'm not strong like other girls. If I let a wonderful boy like you kiss me, I—well, I just mustn't, that's all!"

That did something to Mart.

Three years of Coke dates and chaperoned dances and weekly refusals of his eager proposals of marriage had only poured fuel on the fires of his passionate fidelity. Pan refused to wear his pin, dated the first one to call her and had a wonderful time. Even so, Mart couldn't generate a feeling of true jealousy—until Red Harrington appeared on the campus.

Red came out of nowhere to sign up for spring quarter. He was a magnificent specimen, six-foot-two, with a classic taper from broad shoulder to wasp-waist. He smoked a huge briar pipe, incessantly fondling the hot bowl, and he dressed with an intriguing casualness that instantly marked him as a Big Man On Campus.

Red's classes all happened to coincide with Pan Megan's, an item that alerted Mart at once. He shared only one class with his beloved, but that was enough to see what was going on. His new rival was a vor-

tex of feminine attention, including Pan's.

Painfully aware that Pan's innocence was largely dependent upon her appeal to her escorts' gentlemanly natures, Mart noted with alarm Harrington's boorish manner.

Pan's almost impalpable defenses would need buttressing against a frontal assault from such a character as this.

So when Mart first spotted Pan leaning against the chemistry building, talking to Harrington outside class, he strode up quickly behind the tall, sweated red-head to break it up.

Mart had intended no especial unpleasantness; even after he saw with dismay that Pan was looking up into Harrington's eyes with a sparkle of very unplatonic interest.

The letter-man stepped up to clap the suave giant on the back and inquire why he had ignored the invitation to turn out with the track team.

Before his hand made contact his foot tromped heavily on something round and muscular that writhed under his heel like a rather fat hose full of live steam.

His ankle turned painfully as he slipped off, but when he stared down he could see no unevenness at his feet. He had no time to investigate further, because Harrington whirled with a howl of pure anguish, grabbed Mart by the lapels of his sport jacket and shook him like a football dummy.

"You, you, you clumsy clod!"

Mart's books spilled from his hands, and he stared at the contorted, long, pointed features aghast. He hadn't touched the man, yet—or had he?

Before the pain faded from Harrington's face Mart had a brief glimpse into the momentarily unveiled eyes. They were twin tunnels of bottomless malice.

While he struggled with the futility of an apology, his wiry body reacted on its own. His muscular arms flailed up and out, disengaging the grip on his clothing, then he threw a powerful left at Harrington's chin. He landed solidly, but the jaw was like a rock on a pillar. It was like hitting the bumper of a Mack truck. His knuckles cracked and pain shot up to his shoulder.

A huge, reddish palm lashed out, mashed against his nose and sent him tumbling back on the grass in an ignominious, backward somersault.

When Mart recovered Pan was fleeing from the scene of violence in horror, and Harrington was strolling off puffing a billow of evil, yellow smoke from his over-size pipe.

Numbly, Mart picked up his scattered books and papers. He had no impulse to pursue his assailant. To the contrary, his legs trembled with an almost uncontrollable desire to run in the opposite direction.

Mart Costigan had just encountered the Devil, and he was fully,

paralyzingly aware of it. The invisible but solid tail he had stepped on—the inhuman, unyielding flesh of his jaw—the expression of distilled evil—but most of all, that glimpse into the eyes of hell itself—these gave the only possible answer to the insane behavior of the mysterious Red Harrington.

And as he limped over to the Administration Building, he thought he fathomed Harrington's purpose at Broughly College.

Martin Costigan was no coward, but he felt justified in seeking aid in this matter.

Phillip Lary, Dean of Men and professor of philosophy, greeted him in his office. "Hello, Costigan. Have a seat."

Mart stared desperately at the lean, intense face and floundered for an opening. "Dr. Lary, I—I just met the—the Devil!" he finally blurted.

Lary smiled. "You mean, you just caught the devil?"

"No, sir, not at all. I mean what I said. I just met the Devil, face to face."

Lary blew a cloud of cigarette smoke at the ceiling. "Tell me about it," he invited expressionlessly.

Mart outlined the details of his brief encounter and displayed his bruised fist.

"Red Harrington, eh? I can understand your resentment, Costigan. Everyone knows how you feel about Miss Megan. But what com-

plaint do you propose to bring against this Harrington?"

"Complaint? I tell you, this person is the living Devil! What do you want, a sample of hell?"

He stared pugnaciously at Lary.

Then he knew how ridiculous he must sound. He realized that the shock had driven him to the edge of irrationality, but he couldn't stop himself.

"He's after Panphila Megan. Don't you see? She's been the biggest moral influence this place has ever seen."

"Granted," the professor said mildly. "She's a lovely girl. The faculty recognizes the considerable influence she has had on the student-body during her enrollment. In fact it's almost incredible that one student could bring such changes by herself. I suppose, then, that it's your theory that Old Nick, himself, has shown up in the guise of Harrington to corrupt the focus of all this reform?"

"Exactly. I demand his expulsion at once—before he seduces Panphila Megan."

The Dean of Men brushed cigarette ashes from his neat, blue suit. "This is all most regrettable, Costigan. You must realize how ridiculous your charges would sound publicly—"

"I'll take that chance," Mart broke in.

Lary closed his eyes for a long moment, then he spoke very softly. "You are much too perceiving for your own good, young man."

"What do you mean?" Mart asked, mystified.

"I mean that if you persist in spreading this rumor about Mr. Harrington I shall have you committed to the infirmary and secure your expulsion as a dangerous psychotic. Dr. Fendberg is a—close associate of mine."

An incredible thought crossed Mart's mind and he paled.

The professor caught the expression and smiled. "See here, now, I just happen to know that Harrington will be here a short time only. When he's gone you will find Panphila Megan much more, ah—receptive to your advances. His interest in her is strictly, shall we say, academic, from his point of view."

He cleared his throat and the smile vanished. "If you value your own career and reputation stay out of this. Do you understand?"

He arose and propelled the stunned senior to the door to the outer office. As he shoved Mart through it he said pleasantly, "Always nice to talk with you, Mart. Drop in any time."

It was time for Mart's next class, and as he turned toward the Liberal Arts Building his stride lengthened. It was the only period he shared with Pan and Red Harrington. He was more determined than ever to keep her in sight at every possible chance.

Pan and Red sat across a row from each other, and Mart missed the whole lecture watching the two from his rear seat. When the clos-

ing bell rang, Red surprised him by rising, taking Pan's arm and leading her back to where he was glowering.

"Pan insists I apologize," Red offered with a relaxed smile. His eyes were now a disarming shade of green, and little good-humor lines wrinkled out from them. He didn't extend his hand but he invited, "Just to prove no hard feelings, how about running down to the beach with Pan and me this evening? We'll have a little picnic at Rocky Point, just the three of us."

"Rocky Point is out of bounds for students after dark," Mart pointed out coldly.

"I talked to the patrolman today," Red said confidentially. "He says no one from school shows up there any more, so they don't patrol it."

Pan said, "It sounds like fun, Mart. Don't be a stick. Come along. It'll give you two a chance to get acquainted."

Mart set his jaw, then he changed his mind. "Okay, it's a date. Pick me up at the dorm at seven—then we'll both call for Pan." He emphasized, "both."

"Seven all right, Pan?" Red asked solicitously.

"Just right." Her face was flushed with excitement.

Red patted them both on the back. "Then it's settled." He wandered out lighting his pipe, leaving Mart to carry Pan's books and walk her home.

Outside he interrupted her light chatter about what to pick up at the delicatessen. "Pan, darling, this Red Harrington is—he's not good for you."

She frowned. "Now Mart, I'm no child any more. Don't spoil the evening for everyone. Red apologized, and I think it was very sweet of him to invite you along this evening."

Mart's mouth opened. "You mean, you would have gone out there alone with him?"

She looked thoughtful. "I think I would have. I've—I've just got to face—these things some day."

They were before her house now, and Mart drew her down on the steps. He realized that she was letting him hold both her hands in his. "I'm going to tell you something pretty weird," he warned her. "Don't laugh, and don't think it's just because I'm jealous."

Her hands pressed his palms intimately, and suddenly he realized how conscious she was of the contact. Ignoring the glances of several students who wandered by, he plunged into a confession of his discoveries about Harrington.

When he finished Pan was not smiling. Her blue eyes were large, but not with amusement. "You really believe that, don't you, Mart?" He nodded.

"What a terrible thing!" she exclaimed. "You've never been jealous before."

He shrugged hopelessly. "I knew you'd say that, but I wanted you

to know how I felt. I'm coming along tonight to protect you, not to make friends with him."

She allowed him a little smile. "You know, Red does have a kind of a wicked air about him. But then he's older and more experienced."

"That," said Mart Costigan, "is for sure!"

"We'll have fun," she said impulsively, "but you stay close to me, won't you?" She squeezed his fingers, picked up her books and ran into the large, stone, sorority house.

He walked back to his own shack of a fraternity with mixed feelings. His love for Pan had crowded out much of the fear in his heart, but he knew that he hadn't convinced her about Red Harrington.

A subtle change had come over her—the way she had touched his hand, responding to the pressure of his little caress. She looked and talked the same, but some little element of her reserve was gone. *Harrington's influence!*

At precisely seven the red convertible sounded its muted cacophony of air-horns out front, and Mart took his place on the leopard-skin seat beside Harrington in silence. In the pocket of his sport shirt was a very tiny, pot-metal Crucifix he had borrowed from his Catholic roommate, Bill Thomas.

Harrington greeted him with a sardonic smile. "Dr. Lary phoned me," he said. "So I am the Devil, am I?"

Mart took two deep breaths and swallowed his panic. "I figured he'd

contact you. How did you get control of Dr. Lary?"

"Every man has his price." Harrington eased the car away from the curb circumspectly. "Lary's price was the chair of philosophy at Broughly. He's ambitious and very useful to me so I threw in the Deanship for good measure. How about you, Costigan?"

"I'm doing all right, thanks."

"I wouldn't brag if I were you. You want Pan Megan more than anything in the world. Three years, now, isn't it? Not even a kiss," he jeered.

"I love Pan very much. Is that a sin?"

"Come, now, Martin. You can ask me for anything, practically anything in the world, including Panphila Megan. What'll it be?"

"I just want to know one thing," Mart said. "What do you do with your tail when you sit down?"

"Tail? Don't be ridiculous!" But Mart caught him glancing down between his legs to assure himself it was quite invisible.

Mart relaxed a little at the flash of color that crept up Harrington's neck. Perhaps it wasn't entirely impossible to outsmart the Devil. Somehow he felt confident.

As they drew up before Pan's place the red convertible swung over to the wrong side of the street, and Harrington looked to his left to greet Pan, who was waiting on the porch.

Mart availed himself of the distraction to transfer the little Crucifix from his own shirt pocket to Harrington's.

It was a warm, spring evening, and Pan looked lovely in a demure cotton frock. Her light wrap was over one arm and some blankets over the other.

They stopped at the delicatessen where Pan had phoned ahead for a picnic lunch to be prepared. Red refused company when he went in to pick it up.

Mart was content to sit in his corner with Pan pressed closely beside him. "Pan," he said, "I don't know what's going to happen tonight, but I want you to know that I love you very much. I won't let any harm come to you."

"Ooooooh, don't look at me like that," she exclaimed. "It gives me goose-bumps." But she smiled appreciatively and pressed his hand with a warmth that was very un-Pan-like.

The store door opened and Harrington came out. He seemed to be having some trouble handling the double-handled basket. He was leaning over as if it were weighted with lead. With difficulty he heaved it in the back seat, grunted, and Mart could see sweat on his forehead.

Even Pan noticed his trembling hands and asked him if he felt all right.

"Quite all right," he said brusquely. "Just a little weak for some silly reason. Are either of you wear-

ing a—" He broke off and fell into silence.

They reached the beach just after the sun set. Red hid the car in a clump of high brush, and they made camp in a tiny cove among some high boulders. Together they gathered firewood.

Red volunteered to make the fire, at which Pan winked at Mart with a sly grimace.

They ate the picnic lunch, Mart in stolid silence, the other two exchanging a light flow of banter from which Mart took many double and sinister meanings.

He had a twinge of apprehension when Red uncorked a bottle of red, sparkling wine and poured a glass for Pan. She sipped it and twinkled her nose at Harrington.

Mart wished now he hadn't agreed to the picnic. He could have prevented it somehow. Apparently, Pan, feeling secure with Mart along, was getting a thrill out of flirting with wickedness.

Pat's nose twinkled again.

He refused the wine himself and stepped off into the bushes to cut some slender sticks for roasting the marshmallows. He was gone into the dark only a minute, but when he returned he found Harrington kneeling beside Pan.

The great, red head pulled up quickly at the sound of Mart's footsteps, but even in the flickering firelight he could see a smear of lipstick on Harrington's mouth!

Pan's face was still upturned, her soft mouth trembling from its brief

surrender. Her eyes were closed, and she didn't hear him come up.

This wasn't even subtle!

Mart clenched the three willow whips in his fist, stepped in fast and lashed the seducer full across the face with a satisfying, triple-cut slap.

Harrington screamed like a banshee. Something coiled around Mart's legs and sent him sprawling. Then Harrington stood above him looking down at him with scarlet fury. "I thought I taught you to leave me alone."

Terror shredded all reason for Mart. With no thought of the consequences he scrambled into a crouch and threw a flying tackle. His shoulder caught Harrington in the belly, and he went down gasping, Mart on top of him.

They locked together, rolling over and over. Red's arms locked around Mart and crushed the air from him in a simple, powerful hug that threatened his spine. Then, when he thought he could stand it no longer, Mart felt his adversary weaken his hold. Gradually the pressure went off, and Harrington finally gasped, "The Crucifix—where is it? There—must be one—near me—I've felt it all—evening."

"Find it, damn you!" Mart brought up an elbow hard under Harrington's chin, and this time the big head snapped back. Mart rolled free, grasped the limp body by crotch and shoulder, raised it over his head in a supreme effort and heaved it out over the water.

But there was no splash.

Instead, there was a deep rumble that Mart could feel in his chest. The sprawling form split asunder with a flash of flame, and from it burst a giant, nine feet tall, horned, tailed and glowing a dull, angry red.

The scarlet face that grinned down hideously still remotely resembled Harrington's, even as Mart's jealous mind had caricatured it.

Mart stumbled back and threw himself down over Pan's terrified form. "It's all right now, honey," he said with chattering teeth. "This is what I wanted. He can't harm us now." She clung to him, and together they watched the apparition drift in over the little beach fire.

The flames licked up his legs as he stirred the coals with his long, now-visible tail. He stared down at the cowering pair for a long, calculating moment, then he sank suddenly into the fire.

The flames, embers, ashes and all, sucked down into the sand after him, and only a few sparks and wisps of smoke remained to indicate where it had blazed only a moment before.

They collapsed together with relief. "You're all right now, sweetheart. He's gone."

"Yes. He's gone. I'm—I'm not frightened any more," she whispered.

She was warm against him, her fine hair fragrant in his face. She turned her lips to him, eyes closed,

trembling slightly. "Mart—take me home—quickly, dear. Quickly!"

"Yes, sweetheart."

Neither of them stirred.

"Mart! Please," she pleaded. "I'm helpless. Oh, Mart! Mart, I do love you!"

He had his strength and his breath now, but to move was unthinkable. Harrington had said, "Every man has his price. How about you, Costigan?"

* * *

Dr. Phillip Lary rocked back in his walnut swivel-chair and pressed his fanned finger-tips together. "Well, well, Mart! I expected you a little earlier. I hear you cut your morning classes."

Mart tossed the keys to the red convertible on the desk-blotted. "I wrestled your boss last night," he said quietly.

"So I understand. Quite a gimmick, that Crucifix."

"You keep in close touch, don't you? Well, Doctor, I don't think that Mr. Harrington will graduate with his class."

"Quite right. His work here is completed," Lary said with a smirk.

Mart frowned. "You mean, he's giving up?"

"Not at all. His mission is accomplished. Do you deny you spent the night on the beach with Panphila Megan?"

"Now wait a minute," Mart said quickly. "Let's not confuse the ap-

pearance of sin with the real thing. I'm not as stupid as that. I knew that my real battle was only beginning when I threw Harrington into the lake."

"My deepest sympathy."

"Keep it. For your information, I won that bout, too."

The professor clucked. "What a wasted effort! A number of people on the campus were awakened early this morning by their telephones. All wrong numbers, of course, but they just happened to look out of their windows when you brought Pan Megan home at six o'clock—A.M."

"So what?"

"By tonight the rumor will be well on its way. The mighty Panphila has fallen."

"But she hasn't, I tell you!"

"Explain that to the freshmen. Maybe they'll believe you. Anyway, didn't you kiss her and hold her in your arms?"

"That's no sin!"

"Come, now, Costigan. You know her almost as well—as we do. She's tasted the apple. You've destroyed her resistance. Do you think that all the other men who follow you will be as foolishly considerate as you were?"

He reached in a drawer. "Mr. Harrington left a note for you."

Mart unfolded the paper. On it, inked in red in large, bold strokes were these lines: "If you'd had any

initiative you could have done that long ago and saved me considerable trouble. But thanks, anyway.

(Signed:) *Harrington.*"

Mart swayed a little.

"I'll be damned!"

"Such is my prediction," Lary grinned. "And Panphila Megan in the bargain."

"So he *did* plan it that way? I thought he was using the direct approach."

"Such was his intention until you—blundered onto his tail over by the chemistry building."

Mart reached into his pocket and dropped a folded legal paper before Lary's eyes. "It was a neat act he put on, but he overdid it. He scared the Hell right out of us. Pan confessed that she was completely helpless, so we decided we'd better not put it off."

Lary picked the folds apart gingerly, then dropped it as if it were hot. It was a marriage certificate.

Mart grinned at the stricken professor. "There go your rumors, Doctor. And Pan's dating days are over."

He pocketed the certificate, stepped to the door and waved the red-inked note. "Thanks for the souvenir. Quite a collector's item."

But it was not to be so. As he spoke, the Devil's note scorched brown, cracked angrily in his hand and disappeared in a puff of sulfurous smoke.

shock treatment

by . . . Charles E. Fritch

Out of night and darkness the stranger came—into the beguiling friendliness of another world. But hideous was his alien hate.

SOMEWHERE IN THE mysterious vastness of the world around him a clock was ticking. Ignoring it, he stretched lazily on the soft bed, and allowed the light of morning to flame gently against his closed eyelids. Then he relaxed, and sleep flowed over him again in a great liquid pool.

A voice asked, "Are you awake?"

He hardly heard it. He felt himself submerging slowly, gently, peacefully.

"Feeling better?" the voice tried again.

The pool's brightly gleaming surface came rushing straight at him, dazzling his vision and then showering away in crystal fragments.

"You can speak, can't you?"

He blinked into the sunshine.

"I'm glad you're awake," the girl said, smiling with concern. "And safe," she added.

He raised himself to one elbow and looked at her. "Of course I'm safe," he said, irritated, and annoyed by the unwarranted harshness

A discerning classical scholar once pointed out that if a Roman citizen should walk into a modern drawing room and start to talk, his language and behavior would seem to everyone outrageously coarse—even brutal and obscene. The most painstaking historical research can't reveal to us what ancient Romans were really like, for changing human nature is an historical intangible. But Charles Fritch has traveled much further and dared to imagine what would happen if—but we won't spoil this brilliantly imaginative story for you by giving away its unusual plot.

of his own voice. In a softer tone he asked, "Who are you?"

"My name's Betty Jane," she told him. "My friends call me Biji."

He considered this, rolling the name softly on his tongue, making absolutely sure that he had never seen the girl before. "It's a beautiful name," he decided finally.

He looked around at the strange world into which he had awakened. It was a world of flowered walls and bright curtains swaying in the summer breeze, and an even sunnier, greening world beckoned to him outside the open window. Or had he awakened? None of the objects within range of his vision seemed familiar.

"I wouldn't call it beautiful," the girl said, her eyes enigmatical. "But it does come in handy sometimes. The important thing right now is, who are you?"

He considered a moment, frowning. Mentally he explored the cavity in his mind that had once held the answer, but no clue was forthcoming. He shook his head then, as if hoping the movement would shake the name from some hidden recess of his mind, but he experienced only a continued, confused realization of not knowing.

"I don't know," he said, puzzled. "I haven't the least idea who I am!" He glanced sharply at her. "How did I get here?"

"We found you wandering outside the house last night in a sort of daze, as though you'd been in an accident. The doctor said you were

okay—physically, anyway. That's something to be thankful for."

"Yes," he agreed, trying to remember. He felt very calm, very rational about it.

Last night? His mind retained only a tormenting blur of sensations. Sensations of descending into a whirlpool, of twisting through tides of darkness. Then—an avalanche of sound, followed by a blow that tore his mind to shreds, whirling him backwards in blindly groping agony. After that—

Nothing. Nothing at all.

"We tried to find some identification on you," the girl said, "but there didn't seem to be any. You were dressed oddly—"

"Oddly?" He caught desperately at the glimmering.

"You had on a—well, I guess you'd call it a uniform. Scarlet, with a gold design across the front, and a metal helmet."

He allowed the description to play across his mind, and a half-familiar chord sounded. "I'd like to see that uniform," he said.

She nodded. "I'll get it for you."

He watched her go to the door. She was very pretty, and briefly a part of his mind opened and allowed an obscene wish to hover before him. Puzzled, he dislodged it. There were more important things to consider first, he decided.

He looked around him, at the big walnut dresser with its gold knob-eyes, and at the rectangular mirror on the opposite wall which reflected the face of a ticking clock encircled

with strange numerals. Then his gaze passed to the open window with its breeze-ruffled curtains, and the world of sunshine and greenery which lay beyond. Everything in that world was unfamiliar, alien.

The girl returned seconds later, her arms filled with scarlet cloth, a pair of boots, a holstered gun, and a shattered metal headpiece.

"You must have been going to a masquerade," she suggested, placing the bright costume on a chair beside his bed.

"Yes," he said, already convinced that she was wrong. "Yes, that might have been it."

He reached out to caress the metal helmet, which was sprouting a tangled mass of wire from a jagged hole. He felt the scarlet cloth that was not cloth. He stared at the holstered gun.

"And these," he said, indicating the loose-fitting garments he wore. "Was I wearing these, too?"

"Fortunately not. Those are my uncle's pajamas. He thought you'd be more comfortable in those."

Pajamas! The word was totally unfamiliar. He fingered the double garment curiously. The cloth was not like the scarlet material at all. The two were worlds apart. Perhaps literally, he thought a little wildly.

"I wish I could at least remember my name," he said, staring at the girl who called herself Betty Jane. "That would be a start."

"You could use some more rest to good advantage," she replied.

"Maybe you'll be able to remember more clearly then. Just ring if you need anything."

He waited until the door closed behind her, and then he sat up in bed and drew the uniform, boots and helmet to him, hoping to awaken some memory with their sight. The metal helmet glistened dully as he turned it about in his hands. It was a mechanism of some sort; the wires testified to that. A radio perhaps. He placed the helmet on his head. It fitted perfectly, but when no sound came he returned it to the chair with an impatient grimace.

He next examined the scarlet breeches and the tunic with the blaze of gold across its front. His fingers traced the pattern, but no meaning came—only a vague, unsatisfying familiarity. There were no pockets, no identification.

The boots? A substance not leather, not plastic, but remarkably pliable with brittle, crumbly red mud caught against its smooth surface. Red clay from how far off, he wondered. How many miles, how many light-years? Was red its natural color, or had it been stained with blood?

And the gun. How large a part had it played in the life he couldn't quite remember? He took it from the holster, noting how it seemed to nestle familiarly in his hand. On impulse, he pointed it at a vase across the room, and pressed the trigger.

There was an instant, sharp snap,

like the cracking of a dry twig, and the vase vanished in a burst of light.

Numbly, he replaced the pistol very carefully in its holster, and returned it to the pile of clothing at his side.

He settled back then on the bed, and his thoughts flew across time and space like birds uncertain of their destination. He stared at the robin's-egg blue of the bedroom ceiling, wondering what it all meant, and suddenly the ceiling became a gray expanse of throbbing metal, and he could fancy the pounding of jet turbines below him in a rocket's belly!

He shook his head, and the bedroom reappeared, with its wall-paper, and its table lamp and staring clock. He stared at nothing, thinking: *Who am I? What are my people like, and how advanced is their civilization? How far have I traveled to reach this world?*

But no answer came. In bitter resignation he closed his eyes and tried not to think, and after awhile he dozed.

Morning passed, and when the sun rose high, the girl reappeared, bearing a tray filled with unfamiliar foods.

"Tell me about yourself," he said, as he ate. He tried to sound casual as he added, "And about your world."

She smiled, and to his relief seemed not to think the question unusual. She told him that she lived with her aunt and uncle who ran a grocery store in another part of

the house, and that during the week she was a secretary for a lawyer with an office in another part of the town. And she told him about her friends, and what they did, and some startling, hard-to-believe things about the town itself.

"You've more than aroused my curiosity," he said. "I'd like to get out this afternoon and see some of it for myself."

"Why don't you?" she said eagerly. "I'll be your guide."

That afternoon the two of them walked into the sunlight past flower-scented lawns and small, attractive gardens where children rollicked in carefree delight. He met the uncle and aunt, pleasant enough individuals who seemed genuinely eager to help. The uncle's clothing fitted him awkwardly, but Biji pointed out that he certainly could not wear his "masquerade costume" in the streets of the town. At first he felt ill-at-ease in the restraining garments, but he forgot his discomfort quickly as new wonders continued to unfold.

They walked through a garden blazing with harmonies of color, and across busy streets where strange metal vehicles buzzed and clattered. He saw nothing that was familiar, but every changing vista pleased him, and for awhile the strangeness ceased too.

At Biji's suggestion, they stopped and sat on a hard bench before a field where a dozen young men had arranged themselves to play a game. They seemed wildly excited.

"What is that they're doing?" he asked.

Biji laughed, and suddenly the rippling sound displeased him. "Don't tell me you've forgotten baseball too?"

He didn't quite know why her laughter angered him. But anger him it did, as if all his life he had been the butt of ridicule. As the thought flashed across his mind he wondered from whence it arose, and again why he should feel anger. But he thrust his bewilderment aside and turned his attention to the game.

One of the boys in the field had a round object, which he threw at another boy who was clasping a stick. The boy with the stick evidently had to dodge the missile, and try to hit it at the same time—with such accuracy and force that it would strike one of the boys facing him. It might have been a fascinating game to watch if one of the boys could have suffered instant, fatal injuries. But nothing so satisfying took place.

He stared into the blue sky and realized with a shock that it was the wrong color. It should have been violet. And the yellow-orange sun should have been red! He stared beyond, mentally searching the space his eyes could not see. There was something up there—a silver needle poised, and waiting impatiently. It was invisible, but he knew its exact location in the sky.

And suddenly a voice echoed in his memory: "*Haral*," and a lean

familiar face was staring directly at him. "*See if there is anything worth hunting. We will be waiting—*" The Commander's hungry eyes blazed in anticipation. "*Expectantly.*"

Haral shook his head, and the world of sunlight and blue sky returned, and the smell of the trees in the late afternoon air. Beside him sat the Earth girl Biji, and her hand had somehow stolen into his. Soft hands she had, warm, living. He looked at her and she returned his stare, her eyes beguilingly wide.

"*See if there is anything worth hunting.*"

He found himself shuddering. Shame and disgust flooded through him in a great wave, and he quickly averted her gaze.

She looked at him in alarm. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," he lied. "Nothing at all. I—I think we'd better get back."

In the darkness of the flower-walled bedroom he lay awake, staring into the still of the night, slowly tying together the fragments of memory which were creeping cautiously back into his mind. Memories of another planet in a distant galaxy, of a high impassable wall and of electronic barriers which had once held him confined.

He saw himself in another room many light years away. It was a small room of plastic and metal, with a table, a chair, and a cot fastened securely to the floor. There

were thick bars on a window that looked out on a world bathed in the light of a crimson-streaked sun with a visible corona of pure, pulsing flame.

He saw himself lying on the cot, his body stiffly arched, his eyes fastened in fascination at the sun-red-dened wall, while nameless emotions crawled over his face like tiny worms. His face was not pleasant, and desperately Haral tried to turn his mind from the sight, pressing his eyelids tightly together as though to squeeze out the offending image.

A doctor was saying, matter-of-factly, "He's like the others. Paranoid."

"Another shock treatment?" someone asked wearily.

The doctor shrugged. "I'm not certain we should bother. It works for ten or twelve hours and then—" He shook his head.

The image that was Haral laughed insanely, a secret knowledge glittering in his eyes. He waited, gloating, smiling a strange withdrawn smile, listening for a sound he knew would come.

It came with appalling suddenness. The sound of patients swarming the corridors, and shouting threats and cries of triumph. And following close upon it the rasp and clatter of a prison door swinging open.

And he was free. Free to join the horde of screaming prisoners rushing toward freedom like wild animals.

Up and over the wall! Kill the guards. Kill the doctors, the attendants. Spare no one, let your weapons be quick.

Kill, kill, kill!

Then they were on the space ship, rising on wings of fire to liberty and to conquest. To landings on primitive planets. To live women, and dying men. To the fleshpots of plunder, the odor of blood . . .

He was wide awake now, paralyzed with fright and terror, thinking of the death-blazoned trail which had led him across the universe to Earth—and to Biji.

"Haral," a man's voice whispered. "Haral!"

A figure appeared in the open window. Haral sat up, and snapped on the light.

Just inside the window stood a man in a scarlet costume with a blaze of gold on his chest. On his head rested a shining metal helmet, and strapped to his waist was a holstered gun.

"What happened to you," the man growled, a harsh annoyance in his voice.

"I—I lost my memory, Sark," Haral said; aware of how inadequate the confession must sound to a man who knew nothing of medicine or psychology.

The man laughed. "Do you expect me to believe that?"

Haral swung from the bed, the blood pumping hotly through him. "You—"

"Careful," the other warned, resting a hand on his holstered

weapon. His grin was unpleasant. "The Commander wanted to leave. He was convinced you'd been eaten by monsters." Sark's ugly face was confident. "But I know you, Haral. You're not only greedy. You have no sense of honor. This planet's a paradise and you wanted it for yourself. That girl, too. Not that I blame you—"

Haral stood helplessly, watching Sark, gauging the distance between them. "So?"

"Get dressed," Sark snapped. "I'm taking you back." The gun was no longer in its holster. "Perhaps we can devise a suitable means of punishing you. At least, we can try." He laughed with arrogant assurance.

Haral clenched his fists, but he said nothing. He dressed in silence, wondering if Biji had heard Sark moving about in the darkness outside the house. He had never liked Sark, and now he hated him with a fury greater than he had ever before experienced. Carefully he belted his holster, and still moving with deliberation, bent over to pick up the broken helmet. For an instant he hesitated. Then—

He whirled, snatching the gun from his waist and triggering it even as he ducked the blast from the other's weapon.

He fired twice. Sark crumpled like an empty bag and fell to his knees, agony and disbelief on his face. He clutched his stomach, lurched forward and lay sprawled out almost at Haral's feet. A final,

convulsive trembling seized him, and then he was still.

Haral gripped his pistol tightly and smiled in satisfaction. The blood pounded savagely through his veins as he recalled other times he had known killing and the joy of victory, quick, and unexpected. He scooped up Sark's helmet and put it on his own head. Then, laughing wildly, he stood over Sark's body, and fired again and again, spasms of delight shuddering through him as the flame from his weapon obliterated every feature by which the dead man might have been identified. It was an easy thing to do, and it gave him a pleasant feeling of power, of accomplishment.

When he was through, the pistol hung limply in his hand, and he felt strangely calm.

The door opened almost soundlessly. "I heard a noise! I—"

"Don't!" he whispered urgently. "Don't look, Biji!"

Biji stared, wide-eyed and terrified, at the crumpled figure on the floor, and her hand flew to her lips as though to stifle a scream. She closed her eyes for a moment, fighting back her fear. Then she looked steadily at him, and quietly closed the door.

"You—you know who you are now, don't you?"

He nodded. "Yes—I know *what* I am. I'll have to go back. I'll lead them away. They'll never know about Earth—"

In a sudden impulsive move-

ment, he slipped across the room and drew her close to him. He could feel her trembling as she looked at him in wonderment, but she was not afraid, and it pleased him that she was not. He kissed her, gently.

"But—"

"Good-bye, Biji," he said.

He turned away and went through the window into the night, not looking back. He thought he heard her cry after him—but he could not be sure that what he thought he heard was not a sound from the depths of the restless night, the murmur of the wind in the treetops, or the plaintive cry of a startled bird.

"Monsters?" the Commander said. "What kind of monsters?"

Haral elaborated on the lie he had constructed, while his companions crowded around him, awed by his narrow escape.

"I lost my helmet," Haral finished, "so I couldn't communicate with you or have you teleport me back to the ship. I found Sark dead, with his throat torn." He made a face to express horror. "It was terrible."

The Commander stared at him intently for a moment, then growled reluctantly, "Well, there are other planets."

To himself Haral smiled bitterly, though he knew that there would indeed be other planets, and other women. He wondered how long it would be before the shock treatment wore off completely, before he

reverted to the animal ways of Sark, the Commander and the others.

He decided he didn't like to think of it—but he did think of it, and somehow he began to feel a warm glow of satisfaction at the contemplation. He couldn't blame them too much. *After all, they were superior beings, and they'd been pushed around all their lives and had a right to strike back.*

Slowly, remorselessly, his madness would return. He knew that it would as surely as that doctor had known it long ago on that distant world. They would never come again to this planet, but there would be others.

Still, it was a shame that they must leave such ripe fruit unplucked. . . .

He shook his head. No, there was Biji whom he loved. Biji to think of, and the accidental shock treatment he had received when he had crashed near her home.

Crashed? he thought suddenly. That *must* have been it. But why had he crashed? By what remarkable coincidence had he landed near her house, and been jarred, oddly enough, into normality? *Or at least what the others would have considered normality.* That, too, was strange. Almost—he frowned at the sudden thought—too much of a coincidence.

He shook his head and smiled furtively to himself. His suspicions were already aroused.

But why should he not be suspi-

cious? The only way to survive was to be suspicious even of friends.

Haral tried to subdue the thought, but he found himself pursuing it instead. Suppose—just suppose . . .

The government could trace their ship through space by charting its direction of travel—by charting the worlds they had touched and scarred. *Why hadn't he thought of that before?* The government could place agents on every inhabitable planet throughout the galactic system ahead, waiting with machines that could detect the energy required for a teleportation from space. A machine calculation, and the agents would require only a few minutes to reach the spot where the visitor had landed.

Haral laughed nervously. That was foolish, of course. *Or was it?* His mind persisted with the thought: *just suppose it had really happened. To him!*

Agents could arrive on the scene, overpower him, take him to Biji's home, and—give him a real shock treatment. His mind would be filled with blank spaces, and they could easily lie, and assure him he'd been found wandering in aimless despair and confusion after an accident.

They could secrete a fission capsule somewhere on his body—one that could be activated by a spaceship's atomic generators. They could gain his confidence, so that he would suspect nothing, so that he would return to the spaceship without inspecting his clothing—

No, Haral thought. No, *it can't be true.*

Yes, another part of his mind insisted, *yes, it can be. Humanity is deceitful! It deserves to be trampled.*

He looked wildly about him. His companions were waiting, tense and impatient, for the orders that would send them to new adventure. The Commander was busy staring into the black viewscreen, mentally charting a new course, his hands straying to the buttons that would start the atomic engines.

Where could they place a capsule? Not in his breeches, certainly, or in his tunic. He would have quickly discovered it in either place. And the helmet was Sark's.

His gun! Of course. While he and the girl were out, her "uncle" could easily have installed a capsule there. A capsule that would go off when—

The Commander's finger tensed on the spaceship's firing button.

She did do it! The thought screamed in his mind. *She wanted you to die!*

"Stop!" he cried. "Don't touch that button!"

Frantically, he jerked his pistol from its holster, and a blast of flame struck him between the shoulders. He staggered forward, his gun clattering to the floor, the smell of burning flesh stinging his nostrils.

The Commander swung around, his own weapon darting death. The beam caught Haral in its grasp, lifting him into the air and crushing

him with mighty fingers of naked force.

He fell.

He could hear the Commander's voice saying as if from an immeasurable distance: "He drew his gun on me. Haral tried to kill me."

Haral almost laughed at the irony of it. The men would think he had attempted mutiny. He closed his eyes and lay very still, feeling the life ebbing from him. He heard Bijji's voice:

"Haral . . . Haral . . ."

In his mind he saw her again, her lips curving into a sad smile of regret.

Regret! Angrily he mouthed the word. He'd been a fool, and now, shortly, he'd be a dead fool.

His blood mounted hotly at the

thought, and he felt the pleasant fire of revenge burning through his numbing body. He might die, but so would this planet. She wouldn't live to reap the fruits of her treachery. He hated her. He hated her with a greater hate than he had ever hated anyone, man or woman.

The others could avenge him. The others—his true friends—whom he'd betrayed—

He winced as pain shot through him. Cursing, he tried to rise.

He heard the deep growl of the spaceship's engines.

He screamed in despairing, intolerable agony.

And then, very suddenly—like a small candle being snuffed out—the world was no more.

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FU 31

behind the moon

by . . . Sherwood Springer

**Like some great, unslaked Medusa
was the czarrn, trapped by the
chill dominion of Earth's moon.**

From Deneb to Aldebaran, from Antares to Procyon, over an unthinkable span of eons, the czarrn moved across the galaxy. Spawned in the unremembered matrix of time, equipped by countless millennia of evolution with phenomenal adaptivity, the czarrn swept onward in an inexorable, all-enveloping path.

Back in the dawn of Earth's Cambrian period, when the trilobite was lord of our malformed seas, a single czarrn spore rode out of deep space on the back of a frightened cinder and, fulfilling its destiny, found a home.

Who can say the czarrn that broke from the spore case and developed toward maturity felt disappointment in the world that was to be his? For, assuredly, it was a barren world. His heritage of instincts, however, could never remind him of the rich and immense planets his forebears had consumed before him, nor provide him with comparisons to embitter the philosophic acceptance of his home.

So, in the phlegmatic manner of his race, the fledgling absorbed the

A good many science-fantasy readers will associate the name of Sherwood Springer with a triumph in miniature, NO LAND OF NOD—a short-short so choice and flawless it won instant anthologization, and subsequent unusual acclaim. He has also written some exceptionally adroit and adroitly handled android yarns. You'll agree, we think, that the present story has deep roots in man's primal fear of the unknown and rates among his most exciting.

scanty gases of the atmosphere, sent tentacle-like roots downward into the basalt to leach out minerals and salts that were his sustenance, and began his age-long growth. A millennium passed before budding maturity brought with it the great focussing eye and the spore tubes that marked completion of his function. For the czarrn, in essence, was a living computer, a missile projector of incredible skill; his eye was a telescope that could cross-hair a fifty-pound boulder at a million miles; his spore tubes, set in elastic tissue, could eject spores at withering velocity to intersect trajectories with unimaginable precision.

But fate, this time, had been cruel in another way. The galaxy's rim is a desolate place. Space wanderers to transport the czarrn's offspring were few so far from the sun, and those that came were motes, too fragile to bear the impact of an armored spore. Other planets swept across the night skies, it was true, but their distance was great, and the czarrn instinct kept it from releasing missiles at targets it thought unreachable.

So the ages passed. The czarrn grew monstrous, his slug-like body stretched a thousand miles across the face of his world while the Earth beneath him became honey-combed with the vast reaches of his burrowing tentacles, tentacles that pierced through the surface of the far side of his globe and left gaping scars in their wake. Some of the first of these had sent exploring

fingers hundreds of miles across the surface wastes before they finally withdrew, and the white slime that marked their passage dried to a crust that would gleam under the stars for all eternity.

And so the czarrn, beginning to hunger, eyed the expanse of space.

Waiting . . .

RAOUL LETOURNIER would surely die. But it was not contemplation of his death that set Glock's thoughts reveling in the secret playroom of his mind as his car sped through the desert night. It was the timing—the inspired, incomparable, ineffably sweet and ironical timing.

For Glock's calculations were complete . . . and flawless. He knew what no other scientist of prominence in the astronomical world suspected—the destiny of Letournier's Comet!

At the name, Glock grimaced in bitterness and disgust. Letournier's Comet! Why had he been born in an age of second-rate minds and ambitious connivers? In any other age it would have been Glock's Comet. It had been his discovery, months ago when it had been little more than a dim cloud of light in the region of Altair, and the astronomical journals had been so apprised. But Letournier, a full week later, had given his announcement to the newspapers! And with it a prediction that the comet's path would bring it within a hair's breadth of the Earth.

What had been the result? The newspapers in their stupid way had seized on the dramatic possibilities of this story. Would the comet strike the Earth? Would the blanket of atmosphere be sufficiently deep to consume the visitor, or would fragments of it come plunging through to wreak destruction on our cities?

Knowledge of the tenuousness of comets was sufficiently widespread to avoid repetition of the "end of the world" scare that had occurred fifty years before with the passage of the Earth through the tail of Halley's Comet. But it was known there was still mass enough in some cometary nuclei to provide much fuel for scientific speculation.

And the upshot of all that publicity? Glock became furious whenever he allowed himself to dwell upon it. The name of that fool, Letournier, was on everybody's lips—as if he were a veritable Kepler. They were all fools, the newspapers, the Astronomical Society, the public. Were their little brains capable, for instance, of grasping the genius of Manfred Glock? Did they realize that his mathematical conceptions had outstripped Minkowski and Riemann and Einstein? Had they given ear to his wondrously simple phase theory on the structure of the universe, that so beautifully embraced the loose controversial phenomena?

Ignorant scoffers, all.

Letournier in particular—Letournier, who pretended to be both

mathematician and astronomer, and who wielded a caustic pen. His papers, which appeared at intervals in the scientific journals, dripped with ridicule whenever he deigned to comment on Glock's discoveries.

"The intellect behind this revelation," the scribbler had written about Glock's phase theory, "remains characteristically and profoundly sophomoric. We are expected to harken to it, however, and hasten, with all our hard-won scientific knowledge, to revise every theory we ever held as to the nature of the physical world."

Glock's jaw tightened. No more would the fumbler's pen expose him to scorn and derision. Tonight Letournier would die.

And no eye but Glock's would witness his death.

What an inspiration it had been. Born spontaneously with the stunning results of his calculations on the orbit of the comet, what ingenious repayment it would be for the countless barbs of his tormentor.

And how simple the plan. Letournier, tonight of all nights, would be at his desert observatory. And alone, as was his custom. Glock was familiar with the site, its mountaintop seclusion and the sheer cliff that fell away to a jumble of rocks hundreds of feet below. Letournier might be annoyed by the visit, but Glock would be invited to enter.

A swift blow on the head at the precisely right instant, and the body could be carried to the adja-

cent precipice. Tumble it over, wipe out any trace of struggle, and who, even if the body were discovered, would ever suspect the astronomer had not died an accidental death?

Who could possibly suspect?

Glock glanced at his heavy pocket watch. It was late. He peered ahead beyond the diffused illumination of his headlights. Although the moon lacked two days of its first quarter, the brilliance of the comet overhead bathed the desert in an eerie glow. He could discern the shadowy bulk of Coyote Mountain in the distance, and his foot urged more gas to the laboring motor.

Twenty minutes passed, and the driver suddenly slowed to a crawl. He must be nearing the small mining town of Buffalo Skull. Here somewhere, he knew, lay the turn-off for the observatory, a rough and dangerous four miles of steep grades and cutbacks.

Ah, there it was—a barely discernible sandy road leading off to the right. Glock swung his wheels sharply.

The small domed observatory and the low stone structure beside it glowed greenish against the sky as Glock's car gained the summit. No light was visible from the interior. He cut the motor, and the silence that followed was broken only by gurglings in the radiator, protesting the long climb in low gear.

Glock got out quickly and, with a frowning glance toward the heavens, hurried toward the build-

ings. There was not a moment to lose.

"Letournier! Letournier!" he called, as his great fist beat imperatively on the door of the observatory.

The absence of light from within, he knew, was no indication that the building was deserted. The astronomer, no doubt, was sitting in the darkness, his face glued to the eyepiece of the 12-inch reflector. The smaller of his two telescopes, this ordinarily would prove more satisfactory for astronomical "backyard" work.

There was a shuffling sound from beyond the door, and "Who is eet?" a thin voice called.

A bleak smile crossed the visitor's face. "It is I, Manfred Glock," he answered, as his right hand patted his coat pocket reassuringly.

A bolt was drawn and the door swung open. The stooped and slightly peering figure of Raoul Letournier stepped back to permit the larger man to enter.

"Ah!" he exclaimed in surprise. "My colleague, the Riemann of the Nebulae! You wish to watch the conjunction, m'sieu?"

Glock stalked in, his eyes sweeping the room until they encountered the illuminated dial of Letournier's chronometer.

"There will be no conjunction," he said brusquely.

"No conjunction? You mean you have swallowed these collision-with-the-earth fancies? Mon Dieu, I cannot believe—"

Glock silenced him with a gesture. "Have *you* computed the orbit?"

"But of course, m'sieu. It is Letournier's Comet . . . is it not?"

"And at conjunction . . . ?" Glock pursued, ignoring the suggestion of mocking superiority in the other's tone.

Letournier smiled complacently. "Fully three hundred thousand kilometers."

"And the orbit of the moon? That you have computed also?"

"The moon? Why should I so waste my time? Any child—"

"Letournier!" Glock admonished, as he shot a quick glance at the chronometer. "In mathematical theory you are as blind as an ox. You see only the tree, I see the forest. Your pig of a comet will never reach this conjunction. *In exactly two minutes, eight seconds, it will strike the moon!*"

The other's eyes widened as his mind groped to embrace the enormity of Glock's statement. His lips began to form a protest but no sound issued forth. With the alacrity of a cat he suddenly darted toward the telescope.

"Fantastique," he muttered as he peered into the eyepiece.

Glock stalked after him. "The mass of this nucleus I have also computed," he said, as he came to a halt directly behind the absorbed astronomer. "And its angle of impact."

"And so?" Letournier whispered, not moving from the reflector.

"Tonight the world sees what it has never seen before. The aggregate mass, in collision, will swing the satellite on his axis. Tonight his age-old secret is no more." The big man's muscles tightened and his voice rose slightly in pitch. "You hear, Letournier? Tonight the world sees for the first time . . . *the other side of the moon!*"

The words were delivered like sabre thrusts. The smaller man winced beneath them. "But no, but no," he began protesting. "This I cannot believe. It is too—"

Glock again glanced at the chronometer. "The window!" he barked as, with a lightning shove, he toppled Letournier from his post.

In an instant the world was transformed. Darkness vanished, and, in a brilliance more blinding than sunlight, the mountains and the desert beyond stretched away to the horizon in weird splendor.

Glock stood motionless, with one hand thrown protectively over his eyes, drinking in the scene through a crack made by his fingers, while Letournier lay where he had fallen, his eyes squeezing out the glare. The tableau lasted several seconds, then night claimed them once more.

Shaking off the spell, Glock nudged the other with his toe. "It is ended," he said, as the astronomer shakily regained his feet. "You are fortunate. The release of energy was great. I do not wish you blinded."

Trembling visibly, Letournier looked at him strangely for a moment. Then, quelling a vague uneasiness that was forming in his mind, he turned once more to the reflector.

"This is a night to live for, my friend," said Glock, moving close. "What Kepler or Madler would not have given to be here this moment." His right hand dipped stealthily into his pocket. "Behold the moon. Is it not turning as I have said?"

But the astronomer, suddenly tense, was deaf to his words. With eye glued to the mechanism, he kept muttering, "Incredible, incredible. The terminator, it is—it is moving faster! Mare Nubium, the Apennines, Tycho . . ." He began to tremble violently. "There is something on the dark side . . . something coming around the rim . . . a strange—"

His voice congealed.

"Look well, my friend," Glock cried. His hand came slowly from the pocket and his arm rose silently, implacably. "Another minute of life and you could behold the mystery of the ages. Let that thought impale you as you die."

"Die?" the other echoed woodenly. Then, as the words registered, he cried in quick hysteria, helpless even in that moment to tear his eyes away from the tube. "No, no, wait . . . wait! I see—"

Glock's arm descended with crushing force. There was a dull, sickening crunch, and Letournier's

body fell in a crumpled heap beneath the reflector.

Glock stood over his fallen enemy for an instant, muttering a guttural oath of triumph. It was done. He was alone now, deliciously alone, with a secret that never need be shared. Grimacing with satisfaction, he shoved the corpse aside with his heavy boot and looked into the telescope.

In that second, the mind of Manfred Glock began to splinter.

First of all his spine. Even as his brain started to deny the message of his eyes, frosty fingers began to clamp his vertebrae, one by one, in an immovable vise. Every hair on his body leaped to erection as if tugging to escape the freezing skin that fettered its roots. Then the numbness set in, beginning in his toes, creeping up and up until only his reeling brain, still flopping feebly against preposterous madness, remained uncongealed. Then it, too, collapsed in defeated chards about its gelid core.

For the moon had turned. And the monstrous secret it had hidden since the birth of man lay naked and stark and immense in a thousand-mile gash across its pitted face.

For there, imbedded oyster-like in a gargantuan crevice, glowing with evil phosphorescence, lidless, sinister, and glowering directly at Glock through the telescope, was a vast, incredible and accusing . . . eye!

*The czarrn's dominion trembled.
And then . . .*

*Whence came this gigantic mass
looming suddenly above the horizon?
Higher, higher . . . larger,
larger . . . How had it been concealed
for all these millions of years?
The czarrn focussed his great eye
at point-blank range. The*

*rapidly rising crescent, brilliant
with sunlight, displayed its lavish
seas, its expanse of green lowlands,
its cloud-dappled atmosphere. Oh,
it was a rich, rich world. How his
children would feast!*

*Deep in the czarrn the spore
tubes quivered as the bright crescent
continued to rise.*

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FU 31

back
door
in
the
sky

by...Robert Moore Williams

You may travel almost anywhere
if your desire is strong enough
and you've the courage to tap
without fear on Cardigan's door.

*A person living in a New York
apartment may find he has a back
door which opens silently and un-
expectedly on the Street of the Nine
Saloons, on Venus.*

FROM THE BOOK OF IS.

Author unknown.

JOHNNY CARDIGAN PAUSED, his
heart pounding dully. This, then,
was the Door.

Richard Elkhorn had babbled,
"Go to the Street of the Nine Sa-
loons, Johnny. Search until you find
the Saloon, of the Lost Virgin.
Search until you find—the Door!"

After he had said that much,
Elkhorn had hastily changed his
mind. "But don't go, don't go;
Johnny! Forget what I said. Don't
go near the place. Don't even stay
on this cursed planet. Johnny,
Johnny lad—"

At that point the doctor had
used sedation, and Elkhorn's fran-
tic pleadings had changed into an
unintelligible sobbing and mutter-
ing. Even with the sedation in him,
Elkhorn had twitched and tossed
on the hospital bed, moaning and
crying out that he was in a land of
strange shapes and impossible hor-
rors.

*Few writers of science fiction have a more sensitively imaginative under-
standing of the changes which human emotions may undergo on alien worlds
than Ralph Moore Williams. There's a rare quality of excitement in this
unusual story of a man's search for the mirrored strangeness in himself.*

The doctor had listened grimly and had then taken Cardigan aside. "I don't dare increase the sedation, and frankly, I don't like his response in the least. Something unusual happened to him, just what I can't say. He has shut it out of his consciousness, but it has a terrifying hold on his unconscious mind, and is festering there. If we can find out what it is and reintegrate it carefully, we can save him. Otherwise—" The doctor had spread his hands at this point.

"I'll find out," Cardigan had promised, standing white-lipped by the cot of his stricken friend.

The promise had taken him from the hospital at the space port to the Street of the Nine Saloons, had sent him desperately searching through the driving rain of a Venusian night for the Saloon of the Lost Virgin. Now at last he had found it and in front of him was the *Door*. Looking at it, he estimated that it led into the mountain that loomed gigantically above him. Where it led after that, he did not know.

The portal was an open arch set in an alcove at the rear of the dive. Candles made of some Venusian animal fat glowed dimly in niches on both sides of it, sputtering as they burned and failing utterly to dispel the darkness beyond. Cardigan wondered if light could penetrate that darkness, so stygian was it, so incredibly dense.

For an instant his ears seemed to catch a whisper of music coming

from the darkness, muted woodwinds softly sighing. Perhaps there was also the trace of a fragrance—mentally he identified it with the scent of an apple orchard on Earth, in full bloom on a warm spring day—then decided that his imagination was getting out of hand.

"A damned Venusian dead-fall!" he thought, remembering that the Venusians were a primitive people, taking delight in lust and violence, and that a trap set to catch the unwary would please them most of all.

Anger welled up in him because of Elkhorn, as competent a specialist in radiation as Cardigan had ever known. A gifted scientist and something else—a man, almost a whole man. His breed was rare and was to be cherished, and so were the loyalties which had made the two men lifelong friends.

So were the loyalties—

Profanity rumbled under Cardigan's breath. His impulse was to take the saloon apart slimy stone by slimy stone, and make the Venusians who ran it eat every chunk of rock that he tore out of it. To do that and then to let the light of the sun into the room that lay beyond the *Door*, so that an honest scientist could examine the data there, and add it to the store of Earth's knowledge, or if it proved to be false data, to make the Venusians eat it too, for dessert.

From what Elkhorn had let drop there was every reason to believe the data might be important.

"Why don't you go on in?" the girl said, beside him.

Cardigan had been so engrossed in his own bitter anger that he had failed to hear her come up beside him. Turning, he saw that she was human, and unbelievably attractive, with a strange, dark beauty that brought a catch to his throat.

She was smiling, the long-necked glass in her hand filled with *neth*, the pale pink liquor of Venus that tastes so much like Earth wines of rare and costly vintage. She nodded at him, and gestured with her glass toward the darkness. "Why don't you go on in? There's a virgin in there."

Cardigan was so accustomed to complete candor in speech and thought that the words did not startle him. They did irritate him, however.

She drew close to him and touched his cheek. For an instant her fingers lingered in a tantalizingly brief caress, and then were quickly withdrawn. She seemed frightened by her own boldness—and puzzled as well.

"For a moment I couldn't believe you were quite real," she whispered. "I had to make sure. There's another human here, a man named Smith—Ed Smith. Do you know him?"

Cardigan hesitated, wondering how much he dared tell her, wondering if it would be wise to speak at all.

As he stood hesitating a voice whispered with cajoling mockery

close to his ear: "Would the Great One like to visit the room of the sweet-scented darkness?"

Cardigan stared. Out of the darkness had stepped a tall figure whose cheeks were lifted in a never-ending smile in which his small dark eyes did not participate and whose hands were folded across his chest, completely out of sight in the sleeves of the long robe that he was wearing. Jeweled pendants twinkled from his long ears.

"Come on," the girl urged. "I'll buy *you* a drink." She took him by the arm and pulled him to the front, ignoring his protests that he wanted to talk to the tall Venusian, who was quite obviously the proprietor of the place.

The other Earthman was sitting by the door, a darkly bearded man in the prime of life, with an aspect of anonymity about him that made the name of Ed Smith seem peculiarly the one right name for him. He eyed them owlishly as they sat down but Cardigan was so engrossed with the girl that he did not even glance at the only other human in the place. Drum beats began as the native orchestra started to play. The beats were loud, the rhythms were strange and human ears were reluctant to accept them. They seemed to set the heart pounding against itself.

"Do you have a name?" Cardigan asked.

"Of course," the girl replied. "Mary Jones . . . *Neth*, please, two

glasses," she said to the waiter. "How do you like my name?"

She stared steadily at Cardigan.

"I'd like it better if it were your real one," Cardigan answered. "What the devil are you doing here? Earth women aren't supposed to come into a native joint like this, especially not alone."

She seemed surprised and perhaps a little amused. "They aren't? Why not?"

"They're supposed to have better sense," Cardigan said. The instant the words were out of his mouth, he wished he hadn't said them, for they cut across the girl's face like the lash of a whip and she winced as if from pain hidden somewhere deep inside her.

"I'm sorry," Cardigan said hastily.

"Oh, that's all right." He watched her hide the pain, watched her flick it out of existence with a toss of her head, and move to the counterattack. "If I told you why I came here, you might not believe me. But first, tell me. How were things at Mile-High when you left?"

"Eh?" Cardigan was really startled. Could the girl be reading his mind? How else could she have known that the United Planet Research Laboratories at Denver, Colorado, where research projects of the whole System were co-ordinated—they ranged from exploration of atomic structure to investigation of stellar origins—was never absent from his thoughts?

"How did you know I came from there?" he asked.

The girl's laugh had amusement in it, but under the surface mockery was something else. "Don't be alarmed," she said. "There's just one point I don't understand. You are a specialist in bio-psychology, and your main interest is in the impact of thought on the biology of the organism, and in the reverse of that process, the impact of biology on the human brain. Why would a specialist in bio-psychology seek out the Saloon of the Lost Virgin?"

"I'm afraid I can't answer that without—"

"Unless, of course, his purpose would be to do some research in the darkness here."

"You make me sound like a lecher!" Cardigan said, with sudden anger. "But I should have expected that from you—or any woman who would come here."

She didn't wince this time. "I suppose you want to ask questions. Maybe I don't want to answer them."

"There's the front door," Cardigan said. "There are other tables. Take your choice."

The pressure of time was on him, and he knew he had to be harshly blunt. In his mind's eye, he could see Elkhorn twisting and writhing under heavy sedation. Elkhorn would not wait. Under other circumstances, he might have been gentle with this girl, but the circumstances were as they were, not as he wished them to be.

She looked up quickly and a shudder passed over her and her eyes came quickly back to him as if they ran to him for refuge.

"I'm sorry I spoke as I did," she said.

In spite of his irritation, Cardigan found it hard to resist the appeal in her eyes. "How did you know I work for Mile-High?" he asked.

"I've seen you there, many times."

"Do you work there too?"

"I—I did." Her face showed a change that startled him.

"Don't tell me they fired you? U.P. people just aren't fired."

"They may have fired me by now. I just don't know. You see—" As she started to speak, her eyes mutely begged him to believe her.

"Would the Great One like to enter the darkness now?" a voice said in Venusian beside Cardigan. "A special rate tonight, for Great Ones, only twenty venars." The proprietor's ear pendants bobbed as he talked and his face seemed somehow suddenly to age and grow loathsome, obscene.

Cardigan took a deep breath. Through his coat, he could feel the little weapon nestled in its holster under his left shoulder. A small but very powerful flashlight was in his right pocket. His eyes swept past Ed Smith, at the next table. Smith was quietly sipping *neth* and acting as if he did not have a trouble in the world.

Cardigan brought out his billfold, took a twenty venar note out of it, and laid the note on the table, keeping it covered with his palm.

The Venusian's hand darted toward the money, then stopped hastily when he realized the earthling had not yet released it.

"What have you got in that black hole that is worth twenty venars?"

"Why, this is the Saloon of the Lost Virgin!" The smirk on the Venusian's face was more expressive than his words.

"Ah," Cardigan said. "I see. When do I go in?"

The bill vanished from the table top as if by magic. "Any time the Great One wishes."

Cardigan's gaze came back to the girl at the table. The expression on her face almost made him wish he didn't have to look at her.

He rose from his chair and moved toward the alcove at the rear of the saloon. The Venusians sprawled at the tables watched him. As he passed them, leering grins went from face to face.

Cardigan came to the blackness and he stepped through. He slid the gun from its holster, slipped the flashlight from his pocket. Elkhorn had been here before him. What had happened to Elkhorn could happen to him.

Somewhere in the darkness a girl laughed.

Cardigan took a step toward the sound.

The floor seemed to leap out from under him.

The girl screamed. Cardigan caught a glimpse of pink flesh as she jerked the shower curtains in front of her. An instant later, she thrust a white-capped head and an angry face out from between the curtains and began shouting to him.

"You get out of here. Where did you come from? You get out of here right this minute!" Steam from the running shower puffed out around her head, but the steam was not nearly as scorching as her voice.

"You get out of here right this minute, or I'll call the police."

Cardigan turned blindly, found the door of the bathroom, and jerked it open. He fled through a small apartment where a dining table was already set with bright silver and a white cloth. A motherly-looking woman with a kind face was coming out of the kitchen, carrying a platter with a roast on it. At the sight of him, her eyes widened, and she dropped the platter.

As he jerked the front door open, he could still hear the girl screaming in the bathroom. The words had changed. They were now, "Cardigan, you come back here!" but he did not understand them. To him, they were the most horrible sounds he had ever heard in his life.

He fled down the steps and away from the apartment building. Outside was the residential section of a city, and in the distance, traffic hummed on an expressway. He moved in that direction, trembling, too terrified to think clearly. He

tried not to wonder where this city was located or who the girl in the shower had been. He tried to tell himself that it was all some wild, incredible dream.

It was strange how the sleeping organism could create from the most fantastic dream images the world of the senses, complete in every detail. For instance, he would be willing to swear that there was a concrete sidewalk under his feet and that under the sidewalk was the solid dirt of Mother Earth.

He came to the expressway where the traffic hummed, and saw an intersection and a sign with an arrow pointing—DENVER SKY PORT.

He stared a long time at the sign, then turned his attention to the expressway. Yes, he had driven along it on his way to the space liner that had taken him to Venus! He could even remember—

The shock hit him then. The first surge started upward from somewhere in the neighborhood of his stomach, and the second moved swiftly downward from the mid-brain. The two met in his throat and activated opposing muscle groups there, and quite suddenly he was lying on his back behind a billboard in the darkness.

He was a bio-psychologist and he understood the meaning of shock. He knew better than to try to resist it. Lying in the darkness behind the sign, he let his body jerk and jump while chaotic thoughts flashed through his mind. Thoughts of a chaotic universe which had

neither form nor organization, neither purpose nor meaning, a universe in which life was an accidental intruder on the cosmic stage. He fought this thinking, and it changed. A voice seemed to whisper. "Science is only a scooped out hollow dug by ragged children in a sand bank. It will quickly refill and only the bank will remain."

Another sound came then, a girl laughing. He lurched to his feet and moved toward it.

Venus slipped back under him. He felt, or thought he felt, the whole bulk of the planet move into position under his feet. The blackness of the place of the Lost Virgin was around him again, and as it came sweeping back the memory of the girl screaming at him from behind the shower curtains, the sign pointing at the Denver Sky Port buried themselves in the hidden depths of his mind.

The girl had stopped laughing. Had he ever really heard the sound? Surely the flashlight would reveal whether or not he was dealing with trickery, and fraud. He tried to turn it on, but discovered to his amazement that he did not have it in his hand.

"That's funny!" he wondered wildly. "What happened to my light?" He puzzled over the mystery for a moment, then discarded it. He still had his gun.

Then he discovered he didn't have the gun. It had vanished too.

He suddenly realized he couldn't even see the door. The blackness

spread in all directions, and his hand was invisible when he held it up to within six inches of his face. Maybe he had gone blind, and didn't know it! How would a man know it if he suddenly went blind? He would just be in blackness such as this, with no way of knowing what had happened unless somebody told him.

"Cardigan?" a voice whispered behind him.

He turned quickly. "Who's there?"

"I'm Mary. Mary Jones."

"Oh." He had almost forgotten her. What was it he had told her to do? Oh, yes, he remembered now.

"Please—" came pleadingly.

"I have no time to waste with thrill seekers. A man's life is at stake."

"Yes," the girl agreed, a desperate urgency in her voice. "Yours."

"Eh?"

"Don't you know what you've really got yourself into?"

"A damned Venusian trap. That I know."

"Yes, but it's more than that. Just how much more even I do not know. Hold still until I reach you. We'll get out together."

"How can we get out? The door's invisible."

"I know where the door is. Just hold still. Please. . ."

Was she part of the deadfall—a cunningly planted human bait? Cardigan did not know. He still had a tormentingly disturbing men-

tal picture of a girl screaming at him from behind shower curtains, and a sign pointing the way to the Denver Sky Port. As he tried to think, the laugh came again. He started toward it.

Again Venus slipped out from under him. But this time somehow he knew it was going to happen before it happened, and it didn't shock him so much.

The platter and the roast had crashed to the floor, and the elderly woman was lying in a dead faint beside them. The young woman was still wearing the white rubber cap she had worn in the shower. In addition, she was now wearing a towel and she was talking very rapidly into the phone.

"Please get over here at once, Doctor. I think she only fainted but it's hard to tell. Yes, she was very badly frightened. A man suddenly appeared in our apartment—" The white-capped head turned, the voice became a scream. "And here he is again! Bring the police with you!"

"Easy, Jennie," Cardigan said. He recognized her now. Obscured as she was by the steam in the shower, recognition had not been easy.

She looked at him, studied him carefully, and then turned and spoke again into the phone. "You needn't bother about the police. I know the man and he looks a little scared, but otherwise he's all right. But you get here as fast as you can, for mother is certainly not all right." She replaced the phone, twisted the

towel in front of her, and turned to face Cardigan.

"Look, you are Dick's best friend, and that makes anything you do all right with me. But I am getting a little bit tired of these games you and he have been playing. It is hard on a girl's nerves to look up in her shower and see a man staring at her—"

Cardigan nodded. "It's hard on the man's nerves too, Jennie. Tell me one thing: Was Dick here last night?"

"Yes!" Her eyes widened as she thought of this. "And he's supposed to be on Venus. And so are you. When did he get back on Earth? Why didn't he call me? Has he found another girl? He could at least tell me if he has. Why did he go dashing out before I could even kiss him? Why—"

Cardigan held up his hand to stop the flow of questions. "Please, Jennie. He will tell you as soon as he can." The tormenting confusion was gone from his mind now. So far as he was concerned, he had the biggest missing piece of the puzzle. Not all of it. The whole answer ran out to the ends of the Universe, and came back as human laughter. But enough of it for an immediate practical solution.

"How is he? Is he all right? I mean—" Jennie was off again.

"He'll be all right," Cardigan said. He repeated the words again, for the sake of emphasis. "At least, I hope he will. He will if I can get to him quickly enough. Please—"

He lifted his hand as the torrent of questions began to flow again. Another thought intruded itself. "I wonder what I did with them. Pardon me, Jennie, for a moment."

He retraced his former flight from the front door to the bathroom. The gun and the flashlight were still lying on the tiled floor of the bathroom, where he had dropped them. He slid the gun back into its holster and slipped the flashlight into his pocket.

"Now, another thing, Jennie—" The shock was still coming up in him, still growing stronger. He wondered how much longer he dared hold it from discharge.

"But how did you get here, Cardigan? I mean, did Dick—"

"You're about to drop your towel."

"I don't give a damn! Oh, heavens, what am I saying? Let me get a robe."

"Fine. And while you're getting the robe, do you mind if I lie down on the floor of your living room?"

"Of course not. You're Dick's friend, you're going to be his best man when we get married."

Cardigan lay down, while the shock came again in a series of upward surges from his stomach, and then in reverse surges downward. He relaxed the muscles as best he could, giving the surges more freedom to discharge. They passed through his body in alternate rhythms, like the up and down lines on an oscilloscope.

Cardigan had had a great deal of

experience with this phenomenon. He knew how to let it happen, and under his expert guidance the shock passed very rapidly. Over on the floor of the dining room the elderly woman was breathing very heavily. She had fainted, and was still in a faint because she did not know how to let it happen.

"The pre-set does it," Cardigan said, to himself. A decision of the organism, or a deep wish of the organism, this was the pre-set. Wonder was in him at the power that resided in such a thing. Who did the pre-setting and what was pre-set? "If children must try to draw clear water from a hollow they have scooped out of a sand bank, the consequences must be upon their own heads," he thought. Then he wondered where that thought had come from.

The girl came bustling in. "Look, I've simply got to know—"

"I'll have Dick call you as soon as he can get a space radio channel."

"But—" The doorbell buzzed. "That's the doctor. I'll go let him in."

When she returned a few moments later, Cardigan had vanished. He did not hear her start to scream . . .

Elkhorn was lying in bed. He looked very pale and weak but his eyes were open and he recognized Cardigan.

"Hi," Cardigan said, grinning.

"What happened?" Elkhorn

said. "I went into that place. You know, it was a kind of an adventure."

"Were you thinking of Jennie when you went in?"

"Is there ever a time when I'm not thinking of her? But how did you know?" Elkhorn demanded, amazed. Anxiety began to come up in him. "We're going to be married, Johnny. You know that. I stepped into that place and I saw her just as clearly as I am seeing you here and—" His voice trailed into silence as he tried again to grasp the implications of what he had seen. The anxiety grew stronger and threatened to become full shock.

"You didn't see her in the Saloon of the Lost Virgin, you saw her in her apartment on Earth," Cardigan explained. "And you didn't just *see* her. You were there with her."

"That's what I couldn't understand. That's what I didn't want to know." Sweat suddenly appeared on Elkhorn's face and his breathing grew heavier.

"Jennie is all right," Cardigan said gently. "And you are all right too. As soon as you can get out of bed, I want you to call her. When you get well, I'll tell you the whole story. I know the answers, or most of them."

"Just so Jennie is all right and there *are* answers—that's all I need to know," Elkhorn said. A smile appeared on his face and his breath-

ing grew less agitated. "I can get out of this bed right now."

"Not just yet, but soon," Cardigan promised. "As to the *Door*, when you get well, we'll investigate it together. I suspect the *Door* leads to the primal stuff of the Universe itself, where a pre-set—which is largely a mental process—will manipulate not only the inner world of the human body but will move that body in space. You were thinking of Jennie when you went in. You were taken straight to Jennie. I was thinking of helping you when I went in. I was taken straight to the solution of your problem. Jennie was the problem, and the solution to it. I got some shock along the way, but I was able to run it off—"

"How the hell did you get in here? I left orders—" Cardigan turned to face a thunderingly angry doctor. Then the medico recognized him. "Oh, it's you. Tell me—" The physician's mind dismissed as of little consequence *how* Cardigan had gotten into this hospital room. Perhaps a nurse had been careless.

Cardigan nodded toward his friend on the bed. The doctor glanced at the patient. A glance was all he needed to note the change. "I see," he said, nodding. "Yes, that is very good. He will be all right in a day. But tell me, what did you find out?"

"Damn, I forgot about her!" Cardigan said. "Excuse me, Doctor, I just remembered—something very important. Dick, you keep getting

well and I'll see you again tomorrow." He rushed from the room.

A nurse was in the hall. To avoid terrifying her, he ducked down a side corridor before he manipulated the pre-set and went—away . . .

"Mary," he called softly in the darkness.

"Here I am!" She sounded very frightened. "You went away and I didn't know how to follow you. Just hold still—"

His flash revealed her moving toward him. It revealed also that this room was actually completely bare. Under the light, the walls and the floor glowed like millions of microscopic fireflies caught in a net of midnight.

"Some kind of radioactivity," Cardigan thought. "A natural structure. The Venusians discovered it and have used it to meet the emotional needs of a very primitive people." He wondered what the Venusians found when they came here, then realized that the very name of the saloon gave the answer. The girl was very close to him. He swept her up in one arm.

"Are—are you all right?" she whispered.

"Of course." His laugh was assured. "Mary, you seem to know something about this place. I've been wondering how you got to Venus. Do you know?"

A shudder passed through her. "I took a walk one night, in Denver. And then I was here. I ran screaming from the place. Since

then I've been coming back, trying to find out what had happened to me, trying to learn what was here. Tell me, do you know the answers? That was what I was trying to ask you, but I was so afraid you would think me—odd—that I couldn't find the courage even to ask. What is here? Do you know?"

He heard the pleading note in her voice and understood why she had been afraid. She had simply gone for a walk, maybe hoping she might meet a man, as any girl might do.

"Good Lord!" he said. "Sometimes the stuff in this room picks up a wish on Earth, and grants it." Wonder was in him. And deep awe. "Mary, you're a fine kid. You have more courage than any human being I have ever met. Yes, I know what happens here, or at least I know in part."

"I'm so glad!" She clung to him and he smoothed her hair very gently. Then he stopped, listening.

The sounds of conflict were suddenly loud in the room, the screaming of angry Venusians, the roar of oaths, the crash of breaking furniture.

"Oh, oh!" Cardigan said. Moving toward the sounds, he passed suddenly out of the darkness and into the alcove at the rear of the saloon.

Ed Smith was crouched against the wall. In each big hand he held a gun. Knives were being hurled at him and pieces of furniture and bottles. He was ducking each ob-

ject agilely, side-stepping them, keeping himself always in motion. Meanwhile the needle guns in each hand were throbbing as they hurled anaesthetic-coated slivers of steel at the attackers.

Cardigan took one look and pulled his own gun.

The Venusians, startled by the sight of another human and another gun, broke and ran. They piled out of the front door like a herd of cattle. The proprietor went last. Cardigan took careful aim and slipped a needle between the Venusian's shoulder blades as he vanished from sight.

He and Ed Smith grinned at each other.

"They got a little annoyed when the girl slipped in without paying," Ed Smith said. "I tried to explain, tried to keep them calm. They didn't want to listen to me and they didn't want to be calm. So I had to explain to them in the only way they could understand." He nodded toward the guns in his hands. "They're kind of primitive, Johnny."

"Yes, I know. You did a swell job, Ed. Thanks for it." The girl was tugging at his arm and pointing at Ed Smith. "Oh, him? He's the third member of the United Planet research team consisting of Elkhorn, Smith, and Cardigan. I left him out in front while I went in. You didn't think I would be so foolish as to leave my rear unguarded, did you?"

He grinned at her and liked the smile he got in return. "Let's get

moving before the enemy organizes for a possible counterattack."

As they went out, he saw that the drinks were still sitting on the table where he and Mary had left them. He paused for a moment and picked up his glass.

"Yes, Ed," Cardigan said. "I know you have a million questions to ask about that place back there. I know also that the phenomenon needs to be formulated in terms of modern science—in terms of frequencies, radiations, and mathematical equations. I propose we drink a toast to the team that will give it this expression, you, Dick Elkhorn, and Johnny Cardigan."

Ed Smith's homely face wrinkled into a grin. He reached for the glass on his own table. "Sure, Johnny."

The glasses came up. The *neth* in them was warm and pleasant to the taste.

"Do you—do you mind—do you—" Again Mary Jones was tugging at Cardigan's arm and trying to ask a question.

Cardigan grinned at Ed Smith; but when he spoke the words were directed at this girl who had been walking down a street in Denver, and now—"You know, Ed, I've got a hunch you're talking about a research team of four instead of three."

"How right you are!" Mary Jones answered.

Together they went out of the Saloon of the Lost Virgin, into the rain-drenched Venusian night . . .

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in

books

by... Robert Frazier

Our adventurous critic makes a lively and informative survey of the newest science-fiction anthologies at judgment hour.

ALL ABOUT THE FUTURE
edited by Martin Greenberg. Gnome
Press, N. Y. \$3.50.

Robert Anson Heinlein, who first made his by no means inconsiderable reputation with a series of stories built around a highly imaginative "future history" extrapolated from the present to the next six hundred years, arrestingly sets the stage for this collection of six short stories and four vignettes dealing with various cultures emerging from a third world holocaust by telling us exactly what to expect in our immediate future.

Damon Knight's "Natural State" is the most thought-provoking story in the volume. He depicts with disciplined imagination and a highly competent craftsmanship a mechanical-chemical-biological civilization of city states in which a half-dozen cities are the major governing centers of the country. Dramatic conflicts arise when inhabitants of the outlying areas set out in rebellious fury to tear these big cities apart. This is a fine piece of prophetic science fiction.

Second best is Poul Anderson's exciting adventure novelette "Un-Man," which deals with the social

Robert Frazier is both an experienced critic in the field of science-fantasy writing and a teacher of the craft at the College of the City of New York. You'll like his delightfully beguiling way of making his most sagacious comments seem like the casually conversational "asides" of a wise acquaintance.

and intellectual development of humanity in a culture in which two-mile-long, 300-story apartment buildings comprise whole cities. The Un-Man, a Homo superior-type mutant in the United Nations' secret service, dramatically thwarts the efforts of a powerful, criminally disposed syndicate bent on starting an interplanetary war for personal enrichment and power.

In this reviewer's opinion the next two yarns compete quite engagingly for third place. Fredrick Pohl's "Midas Plague" depicts with ironical discernment a unique culture where rich men are poor and the poor fabulously wealthy. In "Granny Won't Knit," Theodore Sturgeon conceives a world almost destroyed by war where a few grim, desperate survivors evolve a mechanically superior but socially backward culture. They develop extrasensory perception and teleportation to save themselves from a predicament tragically prophetic.

The remaining two short stories by Malcolm Jameson and Walter Miller are not quite as good. Jameson uses the apparatus of future scholarship to lend an illusion of reality to man's early attempts to reach the moon, and a lazy tramp who teaches modern agricultural and industrial techniques to nomadic Martians. Miller spins his adroitly speculative tale from the viewpoint of an alien from a great galactic civilization who has to deal with cannibalistic Earthmen.

This fascinating anthology, fifth in a series of *Adventures in Science Fiction* is heartily recommended because it contains a goodly array of beautifully written satires on vulnerable facets of our culture, extrapolated into unique concepts and ideas.

SCIENCE FICTION TERROR TALES edited by Groff Conklin. Gnome Press, \$3.50; Pocket Books, Inc., 25 cents.

The central theme in this gripping collection of fifteen superb mood yarns is fear. The list of authors reads like a *Who's Who* of contemporary science fiction: Ray Bradbury, Murray Leinster, Isaac Asimov, Robert Sheckley, Margaret St. Clair, Anthony Boucher, Alan E. Nourse and Philip K. Dick. Only six short stories have appeared in previous anthologies: Fredric Brown's "Arena"; Richard Matheson's "Through Channels"; Peter Phillips' "Lost Memory"; Theodore Sturgeon's "Memorial"; Paul Ernst's "Microscopic Giants" and Robert Heinlein's "They."

The best and most memorable story is Bradbury's "Punishment Without Crime." It is Bradbury at his best. Asimov's "Flies" is a most unusual off-trail story. Leinster's "Pipe Line to Pluto" is a real chiller—one that's been overlooked by all other anthologists. I also liked Boucher's "The Other Inauguration"—a sharp, bitter, despairing satire.

This is a good collection and will

most likely be selected by the Science Fiction Book Club.

SCIENCE FICTION MUTATIONS edited by Groff Conklin. Vanguard Press, N. Y. \$3.50.

Groff Conklin has been partially responsible for the tremendous growth of interest in science fiction both by virtue of his energy in editing so many collections, and his outstanding gifts as a critic. This is his fifteenth science-fantasy anthology as well as his fifth s-f "idea" anthology for Vanguard. It consists of twenty-one stories dealing with heredity and mutations in a variety of possible worlds.

The book ends with an original short-short story called "Better Choice." Two other slightly longer stories were never before published in this country: Eric Frank Russell's "Nebula" (from a Scottish s-f magazine) and James White's "The Conspirators" which originally appeared in *New World*—a London publication.

However, the five best ones are: Steven A. Rynas' (Steven Arr) "Chain of Command"; Miles J. Breuer's "The Hungary Guinea Pig"; F. L. Wallace's "The Impossible Voyage Home"; a hilarious novelette called "Cold War" by

Henry Kuttner and Alan E. Nourse's "Family Resemblance." The book as a whole is entertaining and stimulating reading.

STORIES FOR TOMORROW edited by William Sloane. Funk & Wagnalls, N. Y. \$3.95.

This is an outstanding anthology containing several time-tested classics such as Wilmar Shiras' "In Hiding," Ray Bradbury's "The Wilderness" and Eric Frank Russell's "And Then There Were None."

"In Hiding," a story about the tormenting problems and courageous resourcefulness of a ten-year-old mutant superhero, portrays with keen insight the adjustment of the highly gifted individual to society. The most popular short story published in 1948, "In Hiding" won immediate recognition for the psychological trend within modern science fiction, replacing the earlier stress on the physical sciences. Especially noteworthy is the warmth and strength of the writing.

The editor, William Sloane, has himself written some hauntingly beautiful fantasy tales and in 1941, pioneered publication of a series of "books for the imagination" under the Henry Holt imprint.

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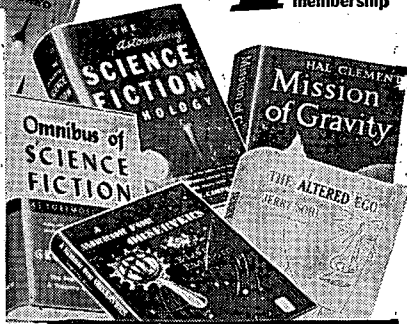
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